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IN TWO VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An ESSAY on the beſt Method of communicating religious Knowledge to the Members of Chriſtian Societies.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LLD. F. R. S.

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THE

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CHAPTER VI.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCE OF SEVERAL MIRACLES WHICH HAVE BEEN SAID TO HAVE BEEN WROUGHT FOR OTHER PURPOSES THAN THE CONFIRMATION OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS.

WE ſhall be much confirmed in our belief of the miracles of Moſes and of Chriſt, and of the truth of their religions, if we compare the evidence which has been brought for them, with that which is alledged in favour of other miracles. For miracles have been pleaded in favour of heatheniſm, Mohammedaniſm, and the church of Rome; but the evidence which is alledged in their favour, though it has been boaſted of by modern unbelievers, as equal, and even ſuperior to what has been pleaded for the miracles of Moſes and of Chriſt is exceedingly defective, if there be any

propriety in the rules which I have already laid down for aſcertaing the value of human teſtimony.

The number of falſe miracles which have gained credit in the world, poſterior to thoſe of Chriſt and his apoſtles, are, in ſome meaſure, an evidence of their truth. Mankind are eaſily led by analogy from one thing to another; ſo that having been compelled to admit the evidence of ſome miracles, they would more eaſily admit that of others, in any reſpects ſimilar to them (as their being wrought by the ſame kind of perſons, and for ſimilar purpoſes) upon much more ſlender evidence; whereas, if nothing had exiſted of the like nature before them, the evidence of which was indiſputable, the later miracles would have gained no credit at all; ſo that the credit which they have obtained is a kind of proof that ſomething better authenticated had taken place before them. In like manner ſpurious Goſpels, &c. are ſome proof that there were *genuine ones* prior to them.

It may truly be ſaid of all miracles, not Jewiſh or Chriſtian, that they were either not publiſhed to the world till long after the time in which they were ſaid to have been performed, or not in the places in which they were ſaid to have happened, or they were ſuffered to paſs without examination, becauſe they coincided with the favourite opinions and prejudices of thoſe to whom they were reported; or that it was the intereſt of prieſts or magiſtrates

giſtrates to favour the deceit. None of theſe miracles were performed in places where they muſt have been the moſt wanted, viz. in the preſence of unbelievers; and beſides, they were of ſuch a nature, as could anſwer no good end whatever, many of them a bad one, and the reſt were whimſical and ridiculous, ſuch as, we cannot but think, muſt have been altogether unworthy of the character of the ſupreme being. And yet, with reſpect even to the popiſh miracles, which are only pretended to have been wrought in countries in which it is highly dangerous not only to make any inquiry into them, but even to hint the leaſt ſuſpicion of their truth; Mr. Chubb ſcruples not to ſay, that they are better atteſted than any that are ſaid to have been wrought in the firſt century, that is, by Chriſt and the apoſtles; and the philoſophical Mr. Hume expreſſes himſelf in a ſtill ſtronger manner to the ſame purpoſe.

The pretended miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus have been ſet upon a level with thoſe of Chriſt by Hierocles and Philoſtratus among the antients, and by Mr. Blount among the moderns. I ſhall therefore give a more particular account of them:

This Apollonius was a Pythagorean philoſopher, cotemporary with Chriſt, and remarkable, as it is ſaid, for his temperance and many other virtues. It is affirmed, that he performed many miracles, particularly, tranſporting himſelf in the air from

one place to another, and even raiſing the dead. He is alſo ſaid to have aſcended into heaven, and to have appeared to the emperor Alexander.

But it certainly tends to deſcredit the ſtory, that Apollonius had been dead, or tranſlated, above a hundred years before Philoſtratus wrote, and that his hiſtory was compiled partly from the commentaries of one Damis, which were never publiſhed, but given to this writer by the empreſs Julia, as *ſecret memoirs*, without any evidence of their being genuine; and partly from the writings of Maximus Æginenſis, and Meragenes, the former of whom only wrote a few particulars; and, according to the character given of him by Philoſtratus himſelf, was a very fabulous and romantic writer.

It is, indeed, ſaid, that there were public monuments of ſome of the Miracles of Apollonius, but they are alſo ſaid to have been in diſtant cities of India and Ethiopia, where no writer pretends to have found them. Some letters of Apollonius are mentioned, but Philoſtratus owns that they did not relate to any of his miracles, but only to the curioſities of the countries through which he travelled.

The manner in which Philoſtratus writes, gives us but a very indifferent opinion of his own character, and his ſtyle is affected and extravagant, full of an oſtentation of learning, and ſhewing a diſpoſition

diſpoſition to exaggerate every thing that could tend to the reputation of his hero.

Many of the miracles aſcribed to Apollonius were ſaid to have been done in ſecret, or before very few witneſſes; ſome were ſelf-contradictory, and others were evidently vain and fooliſh; and not a few of them appear to have been borrowed from the hiſtory of the Evangeliſts.

The occaſion of Philoſtratus's writing ſeems to have been his deſire to ingratiate himſelf with Julia, the wife of Severus, and with Caracalla the ſucceeding emperor, by detracting from chriſtianity, to which they both had a very great averſion.

Laſtly, the ſtory of theſe miracles preſently died away, and the diſciples of Apollonius were ſo few, that there is little reaſon to believe that he was, in any reſpect, ſo extraordinary a perſon as Philoſtratus pretended.

As to the *magical rites* of the heathens, nothing could be more wicked or abſurd. Nero ſhewed the moſt extravagant fondneſs for this odious and contemptible art, and ſent for the moſt eminent profeſſors of it from all parts of the world; but the iſſue of it was his own, and a general conviction of the folly of their pretences.

The emperor Veſpaſian is ſaid to have cured a blind and a lame man at Alexandria; and this, Mr. Hume ſays, is one of the beſt atteſted miracles in all profane hiſtory. But it may be eaſily

collected from the accounts of the two hiſtorians, who mention theſe miracles (neither of whom it is probable believed in them, and one of them evidently did not) that theſe extraordinary narrations were very convenient, in order to give weight to the authority of Veſpaſian, who was newly made emperor.

Mohammed himſelf did not pretend to any miracle, except the Koran itſelf; and that this was a divine compoſition, he does not pretend to give any poſitive proof; but contents himſelf with appealing to its own excellence; and it was probably ſuperior to the poetical compoſitions of other Arabians of his time; and this it might very well be, though written by himſelf, or his confidents. In the tranſlation of Mr. Sale, who is allowed to have been a great maſter of the Arabic language, and who certainly meant to give it all poſſible advantage, it is, upon the whole, a very mean performance. The ſtyle of the Koran cannot be ſaid to be comparable to that of many parts of the Old Teſtament, which, however, was never alledged as any proof of its divinity.

It does not appear that this only pretended miracle of Mohammed gained him any followers; the propagation of his religion having been owing chiefly to the ſword. Moreover, though the Mohammedan religion be very abſurd, and unnaturally harſh in ſome reſpects, eſpecially in the abſolute

lute prohibition of wine, it flatters men with the greateſt indulgence in others; every man being allowed four wives, and as many concubines as he can keep; and the future rewards of good Muſſelmen are repreſented as being of a ſenſual nature. The great advantage which Mohammedaniſm had over the corrupt chriſtianity of the times in which it was publiſhed, was, that it aſſerted the great doctrine of the unity of God, againſt the Trinitarians; but, in other reſpects, all who profeſs this religion are ſlaves to the moſt abject ſuperſtition. And yet Mr. Chubb ſays, that whether Mohammedaniſm be a divine revelation, or not, there ſeems to be a plauſible pretence, ariſing from the circumſtance of things, to ſtamp a divine character upon it.

Of all the Popiſh miracles, thoſe which have been aſcribed to the Abbé Paris are generally allowed to be the moſt credible. Mr. Hume boaſts exceedingly of them, aſſerting that no where elſe can there be found ſuch a number of circumſtances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact; and that nothing can be oppoſed to ſuch a cloud of witneſſes, but the abſolute impoſſibility, or miraculous nature of the events. He even ſays, that thoſe miracles may be ſaid, with ſome appearance of reaſon, to ſurpaſs thoſe of Chriſt in evidence and authority, *Philoſophical Eſſays*, p. 198, &c. Let us now conſider a few circumſtances which

our philoſopher ſeems to have overlooked, when he gave his judgment in this caſe.

At the time when theſe miracles were ſaid to have been performed, there was a ſtrong and numerous party in France, under the conduct of very able and learned men, who were ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed in favour of that cauſe which thoſe miracles were calculated to ſupport; and on the firſt rumour of them, they were eagerly cried up, and conſidered as the clear deciſion of heaven in favour of the Janſeniſts.

The character of this Abbé was ſuch, as makes it highly improbable that any miracle ſhould have been wrought by him, or in his favour. His whole life was a courſe of the moſt abſurd and painful ſuperſtitions. He abridged himſelf even of the neceſſaries of life, and was, in fact, acceſſary to his own death, by refuſing proper aſſiſtance, and even better nouriſhment, when he was manifeſtly drawing near his end, in conſequence of his extreme auſterities.

By the manner in which Mr. Hume writes upon this ſubject, one would imagine that theſe miracles had never been contradicted, and that the evidence for them had never been diſputed; and yet the fact is, that they were always ſuſpected by moſt perſons who heard of them; that the archbiſhop of Sens conſidered twenty-two of them as impoſtures; that the counſellor Montgeron, who undertook

dertook to confute him, gave up ſeventeen of theſe pretended cures, and defended only five; that M. Des Voux proved to him that he defended them very ill; that in the judicial proceedings upon the occaſion, the falſity of many of theſe prodigies was demonſtrated; that many witneſſes abſconded to eſcape examination; that others depoſed that their certificates had been falſified, by the addition of circumſtances which were not true; that many of the ſick perſons proteſted againſt the account which had been publiſhed of their cures; that many of thoſe who had been ſubject to convulſions, confeſſed to M. De Heraut, the lieutenant of the police, that their convulſions were artificial; that the cures, true or falſe, were but gradual, and accompliſhed by ſeveral ſteps; that they were obliged to go nine times at leaſt, and often more, to the tomb of the Abbé; ſo that the cures might very poſſibly be either the work of time, of a lively imagination, or of the medicines which they continued to take; that by far the greateſt number of thoſe who applied for a cure were diſappointed; that it was very unlikely that the aſſiſtance of the divine being ſhould not have been obtained but by means of convulſions, ſwoonings, violent, and ſome times very indecent geſtures, which thoſe who applied for a cure made uſe of; and laſtly, that theſe miracles entirely ceaſed when no credit

was given to them; and inſtead of drawing the Janſeniſts out of the low reputation into whey they were fallen, they only ſerved to make the whole party more ridiculous and contemptible *.

Mr. Hume alſo mentions after the cardinal De Retz, a miracle which was ſaid to have been wrought in Saragoſſa; but, by Mr. Hume's own account, the cardinal himſelf did not believe it.

The laſt inſtance I ſhall mention is one on which Mr. Chubb lays great ſtreſs, viz. a miracle ſaid to have been wrought among the Camiſards, or the proteſtants in the South of France, and which he ſays cannot be diſtinguiſhed from a real miracle. The principal thing that was exhibited upon this occaſion was one Clary, ſeeming to ſtand or dance about in the flames unhurt. The account was publiſhed by Mr. Lacy, an Engliſh gentleman, who joined the French proteſtants when they took refuge in England, from the depoſitions of John Cavalier, a brother of the principal leader of the Camiſards, but a perſon of an infamous character, who afterwards turned papiſt, and enliſted in the French king's guards.

But M. Le Moine, who anſwered Mr Chubb's treatiſe on miracles, in which this fact was mentioned, having taken ſome pains to enquire into it, found, upon the teſtimony of the moſt unexcep-

* Lettres de Rouſſan, p. 85, &c.

tionable

tionable witneſſes, eſpecially that of one Serres, who had been a member of the privy council of the Camiſards, that the whole buſineſs was a trick, contrived by themſelves, in order to encourage their troops. This perſon, when near his death, gave a circumſtantial account of the manner in which the artifice had been conducted; and the particulars, together with the proofs of the whole diſcovery, may be ſeen in M. Le Moine's treatiſe on miracles, p. 420, &c.

CHAPTER VII.

A VIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS.

IN the preceding ſections I have given a general view of the evidence for the truth of the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, or the reaſons which induce me to believe that the divine being has interpoſed in the affairs of this world, giving mankind laws and admonitions, with ſuch ſanctions reſpecting our future expectations, and eſpecially our expectations after death, as we find an account of in the ſcriptures; and I preſume that ſuch facts have been produced, as cannot be accounted for without ſuppoſing that theſe books contain a true and authentic hiſtory.

That teſtimony ſo copious, and ſo particularly circumſtanced, given by ſuch numbers of perſons, who had the beſt opportunity of being informed, and who were ſo far from having any motive to impoſe upon the world, ſhould, notwithſtanding, be given to a falſhood, cannot be admitted, without ſuppoſing all thoſe perſons to have been conſtituted in a manner quite different from other men. And by whatever method of reaſoning we diſpute the authenticity

authenticity of the books of ſcripture, we may queſtion the genuineneſs of all antient writings, and invalidate the evidence of all hiſtory.

Such known facts of other kinds have alſo been produced, eſpecially reſpecting the reception which the pretenſions to divine communications by Moſes, by Chriſt, and his apoſtles have met with, from perſons who could have had no motive to admit them, except the fulleſt conviction of their truth, and alſo reſpecting the degrees of religious knowledge poſſeſſed by the Jews and chriſtians, who were far from having any peculiar natural advantage for the attainment of it, as cannot be accounted for without the ſuppoſition of their having had ſuch divine communications as they pretended to.

Laſtly, not only have many remarkable events come to paſs agreeable to predictions publiſhed in thoſe books, but the *preſent ſtate* of ſeveral conſiderable cities, of whole nations, and of the world in general, is ſuch as was exactly deſcribed in them ſeveral hundred years ago; ſo that we cannot but have the greateſt reaſon to expect the full accompliſhment of all the other predictions, for which we have the ſame evidence that they came from God, and eſpecially that which is the great object of the whole ſcheme of revelation, and to which, if we believe it, it behoves us to have conſtant reſpect, viz. that Chriſt will come again to raiſe the dead,

to

to judge the world, and to give unto every man according to his works.

Notwithſtanding this direct and plenary evidence for the truth of the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions, many perſons, who have been extremely prejudiced, and conſequently averſe to receive them, either overlooking ſome of the more eſſential particulars of which it conſiſts, or not fully comprehending it, have ſtarted ſeveral objections. I ſhall therefore diſtinctly mention, and briefly reply to the principal of them, eſpecially ſuch as are thought to be the moſt plauſible, and which have the moſt weight at preſent.

SECTION I.

Various objections reſpecting the Old Teſtament.

SOME of the moſt plauſible objections that have yet been made to the ſyſtem of revelation above-mentioned affect the Jewiſh religion only. It is ſaid to repreſent the divine conduct in ſuch a ſhape as is inconſiſtent with his known attributes of light, juſtice and goodneſs, particularly his expreſs order to deſtroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, without ſparing even innocent children, his command to Abraham to ſacrifice his ſon Iſaac, and his direction to the children of Iſrael to borrow of the Egyptians jewels,

jewels, and other valuable things, without any deſign to return them.

Before I reply to each of theſe objections, I ſhall make a few general obſervations reſpecting them all.

To theſe, and all ſuch like objections, the ſame general anſwer may be made as to ſimilar objections to the juſtice and goodneſs of God in the natural world, where we ſee many things which we are not able to reconcile to thoſe principles, as they are rules of human conduct; and there is no reaſon to expect that revealed religion ſhould be more free from theſe objections than natural religion. On the contrary, we might expect, that, if both the diſpenſations have the ſame author, they would be ſo ſimilarly conſtituted, as to be attended with ſimilar advantages, and ſimilar difficulties. Now we ſee that, under the government of the ſame God, the innocent are frequently involved in the ſame calamities with the guilty; the laws of nature being ſo framed, as to be only *in general* favourable to virtue, without making exceptions on account of individuals.

If the vices and follies of a nation, or of its governors, bring war, famine, or peſtilence into it, the righteous are not ſpared; ſtorms, tempeſts, and earthquakes make no diſtinction of virtuous or vicious, and innocent children ſuffer every day in conſequence of the profligacy and debauchery of their

their parents. If, therefore, it be conſiſtent with the divine attributes to permit war, peſtilence, famine, or earthquakes, by which numbers of our race, of all characters, are promiſcuouſly ſwept away, why might not the ſame being commiſſion the Iſraelites utterly to extirpate a nation abandoned, without hope of recovery, to the moſt abominable idolatries and wickedneſs. With reſpect to the divine being, there can be no material difference; and indeed there is very little, in any caſe, between *appointment* and *permiſſion*, where there is a ſufficient power of prevention. Alſo, as it is alledged, that the inequalities of common providence may be rectified in a future ſtate, the very ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to theſe ſpecial providences.

The great object of divine government is the production of happineſs; and as we ſee, in the ordinary diſpenſations of his providence, that temporal evils are, in many caſes, inſeparably connected with, and ultimately productive of good, we may preſume that every thing to which ſimilar objections may be raiſed in the courſe of his extraordinary diſpenſations, will, in the end, be ſeen to have the ſame advantages; and then they will ſtand perfectly clear of all objections. In the mean time, it becomes us (as we are obliged to do with reſpect to every thing that we have to complain of in the conſtitution and government of the natural world) to wait with patience,

patience, till we can ſee farther into the nature and uſes of things than we can do at preſent. The reaſon why the rules of ſtrict juſtice and veracity are binding upon us, is becauſe it is the only way in which our mutual happineſs, as ſocial beings, can be promoted *by ourſelves*. We have ſeen already that the moſt indiſpenſible moral duties are, in fact, *means* to a certain end; and it is poſſible that, in ſome caſes, a being of infinite wiſdom may gain the ſame great end by what appears to us to be a deviation from any rules.

However, with reſpect to the caſe of the Canaanites, we may, I think, ſee great wiſdom and propriety in their utter extermination, in the manner in which it was accompliſhed by the Iſraelites. It might be highly expedient, and even neceſſary, for the inſtruction of that age of mankind, that the divine being ſhould make a ſignal and ſtriking example of a nation ſo far ſunk into idolatry, and corruptions of all kinds, as all the inhabitants of Canaan are ſaid to have been; and the hand of God would not have been ſo viſible in their deſtruction, and conſequently the moral leſſon would not have been ſo ſtriking, and uſeful, if it had been accompliſhed by a flood, an earthquake, or any other natural means, as had been already tried in the caſe of the old world, and of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah; whereas the hand of God could not but appear when the puniſhment was executed by a people

a people who received an expreſs and manifeſt commiſſion from him for that purpoſe; and this could not but be evident, when all the paſſage of the children of Iſrael from Egypt to the land of Canaan was conducted by a ſeries of miracles, and when they were aſſiſted by ſupernatural power in making their conqueſts. It was like the regular execution of a commiſſion, by perſons who carried their credentials or warrant along with them.

The particular reaſons for the extirpation of the Canaanites are clearly and repeatedly expreſſed in the books of Moſes. Thus, in one place, the ſettlement of the Iſraelites in the promiſed land is ſaid to have been deferred, becauſe the iniquity of the inhabitants was not full; and the Iſraelites are frequently reminded that the extermination of the Canaanites, and their own ſettlement in the country, were appointed by God, not on account of their goodneſs, but for the wickedneſs of thoſe people who were driven out before them. It is remarkable that, in all the other wars in which the Iſraelites might happen to be engaged with their neighbouring nations, they were expreſsly enjoined to purſue very different and more humane maxims, ſparing all except ſuch as were found bearing arms. In this particular caſe, only, they were expreſsly commanded to *exterminate utterly.*

That the Iſraelites were not influenced by the uſual paſſions of conquerors, but acted under an authority

authority which controuled their natural deſires, is manifeſt from their not ſparing even the cattle, and even refraining to appropriate to themſelves the treaſure which they found in Jericho, which was the firſt fruits of their conqueſts, and to be devoted to God. The Iſraelites have often been compared to barbarous conquerors and cruel murderers; but let other conquerors and aſſaſſins be produced, who refrained from plunder as theſe did. That they were not actuated by mere *rage* and *revenge* is evident from their having received no particular provocation, not indeed, having had any perſonal intercourſe with the inhabitants of Canaan. Their motives, it is evident, muſt have been of a very different nature from thoſe of common robbers and murderers, and, in the eye of reaſon, it is the *motive* that determines the nature of the action.

It is alſo remarkable that, notwithſtanding the paſſion the Iſraelites may be ſuppoſed to have had for war, which would have been inflamed by the rapidity of their conqueſts, they were forbidden to extend them beyond the boundaries of the land of Canaan; and the conſtitution of their government was altogether unſuited to extenſive empire.

It would be a ſufficient reaſon for the extermination of the Canaanites by the ſword of the children of Iſrael, if, as is very poſſible, it was the beſt method of impreſſing the minds of the Iſraelites themſelves with a juſt idea of the heinous nature of idolatry,

idolatry, and to make ſufficient proviſion againſt their being ſeduced into the ſame abominable practices. If their living only in the neighbourhood of idolatrous nations was ſo unſafe for this people, as their hiſtory ſhews it to have been, what danger would they not have been in, if they had ſpared the old inhabitants of Canaan, and ſuffered them to live unmoleſted among them.

I would obſerve, however, that the order to exterminate utterly in the caſe of the Canaanites; though expreſſed in abſolute terms, is ſuppoſed by ſome to have been *conditional* in fact, and that their lives were to have been ſpared upon their ſubmiſſion, and eſpecially on their forſaking idolatry.

This ſuppoſition is ſufficiently analogous to other threatnings in the ſcriptures (the nature of which is explained by the prophet Ezekiel xxxiii. 14.) as that of Jonah againſt the Ninevites. He was commiſſioned to ſay that *in forty years Nineveh ſhould be overthrown*, Jonah iii. 4. and yet we ſee that, upon repentance, that city was ſpared.

It is plain in fact, that the Iſraelites either did not underſtand the command to be abſolute, or they knowingly tranſgreſſed it, even in the beſt and moſt flouriſhing ſtate of their affairs; for mention is made of the remains of the Canaanitiſh nations living in ſubjection to the Iſraelites even to the times of the kings. 1 Kings, ix. 20, 21.

All

All the people that were left, of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebuſites, which were not of the children of Iſrael, their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Iſrael alſo were not able utterly to deſtroy, upon thoſe did Solomon levy a tribute of bond ſervice unto this day. It is plain from this paſſage that, though before the days of David and Solomon, the Iſraelites could not entirely ſubdue thoſe nations, they were then wholly reduced, and at the mercy of their conquerors; and we no where read of their being blamed for the favour they ſhewed them, as Saul was in the caſe of the Amalekites, who were reduced by war. We alſo read Judges, i. 28. *It came to paſs that when Iſrael was ſtrong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.* And it muſt be obſerved that Uriah, one of David's principal heroes was a Hittite.

Beſides the *reaſon* and *end* for which the order for the extermination of the Canaanites was given, which was, leſt the children of Iſrael ſhould be inticed by them into idolatry, entirely ceaſed upon their ſubmiſſion, and abandoning their idol worſhip.

Laſtly, it is pretty clearly inferred, that this order was conditional, from finding that if the hearts of the Canaanites had not been hardened to oppoſe the Iſraelites, they would not have been cut off. Joſhua, xi. 19, 20. *There was not a city that made peace*

peace with the children of Iſrael ſave the Hivites. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they ſhould come againſt Iſrael in battle, that he might deſtroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might deſtroy them, as the Lord commanded Moſes, i. e. evidently in caſe of oppoſition only. As to the Lord's hardening their hearts, there is nothing peculiar in it in this caſe, and, it will be explained hereafter.

The orders which the Jews had, not to ſpare even their neareſt relations, if they ſhould attempt to ſeduce them into idolatry, has been made the foundation of the ſame charge of cruelty, and has alſo been cenſured as a perſecution on the account of religious principles. But it ſhould be conſidered, that the very reaſon for ſetting apart the Jewiſh nation to be the theatre of the extraordinary providence of God, reſpecting the whole world of mankind, which was at that time univerſally ſinking into idolatry, was to ſecure the belief of the great and important doctrine of *the divine unity*, and univerſal moral government; and that this, which was the great object both of the religious conſtitution, and alſo of the civil government of the Hebrews, would have been defeated, if the moſt effectual proviſion had not been made for ſecuring to the one true God the allegiance of this one nation, and their adherence to the purity of his worſhip.

Beſides,

Beſides, it being abſolutely neceſſary to the great purpoſes of the Jewiſh diſpenſations, that a ſpecial and extraordinary providence ſhould conſtantly attend that people, making them proſperous and flouriſhing ſo long as they preſerved the purity of their religion, and involving them in national calamity and diſtreſs whenever they departed from it, the Iſraelites themſelves would not have been fairly dealt with, if every poſſible avenue had not been guarded againſt the introduction of ſo deſtructive an evil. And, after all, we ſee that, even theſe ſeemingly rigorous methods, were not quite ſufficient for the purpoſe; and that the divine being was obliged, as we may ſay, to teach his uſeful leſſons to the world by the *puniſhment*, as well as *proſperity* of his favourite people; but in either of theſe caſes, their *example* was of the ſame benefit to the world at large.

It ſhould alſo be conſidered, that the idolatry of the antient Gentile world, and eſpecially that of the inhabitants of Canaan, was by no means a ſyſtem of merely ſpeculative *opinions*; but a courſe of the moſt atrocious and abominable *practices*, enjoining the cruel murder of numberleſs innocent children, as well as other human victims, and the moſt ſhocking lewdneſs, together with other vices of the moſt unnatural and deteſtable nature. And ſurely it becomes a wiſe legiſlator, to reſtrain the commiſſion of ſuch deſtructive vices as theſe.

As

recompenſe they were fairly intitled to ſhould be conſidered, in order to leſſen the difficulty which might ariſe from the account of the method which they took to recover their right. But the word which we render *borrow*, alſo ſignifies to *require*, or *demand*; and in the ſituation in which the Egyptians are repreſented to have been, willing to get rid of the Iſraelites at any rate, *leſt they ſhould all be dead men*, it may eaſily be imagined, that they would have been as ready to *give*, as to *lend* them, whatever they ſhould have aſked.

It is alſo ſaid, that when they left the country, it was on a promiſe to return; but certainly that promiſe muſt have been cancelled by the hoſtile manner in which they were purſued by the Egyptians. Beſides the uſe of ſtratagems, in order to free men from unjuſt ſervitude, is not conſidered as liable to much objection in the hiſtory of human affairs.

It is alſo objected to this part of the hiſtory, that God is ſaid to have *hardened the heart* of Pharaoh, in order that he might do the very things for which he is expreſsly ſaid to have been puniſhed. But in the language of ſcripture, God is often ſaid to *do*, whatever comes to paſs according to the ordinary courſe of nature and providence; and therefore God's not interpoſing to ſoften the heart of Pharaoh, may be all that is meant when he is ſaid to harden it.

Beſides,

Beſides, it is ſufficiently intimated, in the courſe of the narration, that the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, not by any proper act of God, but in conſequence of its own depravity, and the circumſtances he was in. For when the frogs were removed, we read, Exod. viii. 15, that *when Pharaoh ſaw that there was reſpite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had ſaid.* Pharaoh does not ſeem to have been more infatuated than the rulers of the Jews were, with reſpect to the murder of Chriſt; and yet nobody ſuppoſes that they did not, in that caſe act, naturally, or as their own evil diſpoſitions prompted them.

It is ſaid that, by the account of Moſes himſelf, miracles were wrought by the Egyptian magicians, as well as by himſelf and Aaron; and therefore that his miracles were no proof of a divine miſſion. But all that Moſes really ſays, is that the Egyptians did (by which he could not poſſibly mean more than that they *ſeemed*, or *pretended to do*) by their arts and tricks, what he performed by the finger and power of God. The word which we render *ſo*, only means a *general ſimilitude*, and by no means, neceſſarily, a *perfect ſameneſs*, reſpecting both the effect and the cauſe. Nay, this very word is applied when the magicians failed of ſucceſs. Exod. viii. 18. *They did ſo, to bring forth lice, but they could not*, that is, they practiſed the

ſame arts, but in vain. Alſo the words which we render *enchantments*, &c. only ſignify *covered arts*, and *ſecret ſleights*, in which the Egyptians are known to have excelled.

If the Egyptian magicians were really poſſeſſed of ſupernatural power, why did they not employ it to defeat the purpoſes of Moſes's miracles, and relieve their country? More eſpecially, why did they not guard themſelves from the boils which are expreſsly ſaid to have been upon the magicians, as well as upon Pharaoh, and the reſt of the Egyptians; and why did they fail in the caſe of the lice? The reaſon of this failure plainly appears, from the hiſtory, to have been, that, with reſpect to this miracle, they had no notice beforehand what they were to do, and therefore could not prepare themſelves as before.

Pharaoh himſelf would naturally imagine, that the miracles of Moſes were only ſuch tricks as his own magicians excelled in, and therefore very properly called them in, to ſee whether they could do the ſame, and detect the impoſition; and ſo long as they could contrive to ſeem to do any thing like what Moſes performed, it is no wonder that, circumſtanced and prejudiced as he was, he ſhut his eyes to the evidence of the divine power which accompanied Moſes.

In fact, the Egyptian magicians themſelves ſeem to have confeſſed, that there was nothing above the

the art and power of man in what they did, when, upon their failing to produce lice, they acknowledged that the *finger of God*, or, as it might be rendered, the finger *of a God*, or ſomething ſupernatural, was in it.

It has been ſaid that, in ſeveral reſpects, the preſent ſtate of the world, and of mankind, does not correſpond to what is ſaid of the hiſtory of them in the books of Moſes. But the more we underſtand of natural and civil hiſtory, the leſs weight there appears to be in all objections of this kind.

It has been ſaid, that the peopling of America is inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of the derivation of the whole race of mankind from one pair. But it is now almoſt certain, that America was, in fact, peopled from the continent of Europe and Aſia, and eſpecially from the North Eaſtern parts of the latter, which is found to be very near, and may perhaps have been joined to it. This is argued from a ſimilarity in features, cuſtoms, vegetable, and animal productions, &c.

Objections have been made to the Moſaic account of the *creation*, and the general *deluge*. But even in theſe caſes the hiſtory of Moſes is found to ſupply a more probable hypotheſis, to account for the preſent ſtate of things, than any other that has yet been propoſed; and improvements in philoſo-

phy do, upon the whole, rather ſtrengthen than weaken this concluſion.

It is alledged, that the origin of the *Blacks* cannot be accounted for on the principles of the Moſaic hiſtory. But there are ſeveral ways by which this fact may be reconciled with what Moſes has advanced concerning Adam and Noah. If natural means be not thought ſufficient to produce this effect, on a few individuals, in ſome early age, that change may have been produced ſupernaturally, though not mentioned by Moſes; and the propagation of Blacks from Blacks, whenever that variety in the ſpecies took place, is allowed to be according to the common courſe of nature. The copper colour of the Americans, and the low ſtature of the Laplanders and Eſquimaux, have alſo been alledged by unbelievers, but to as little purpoſe.

The objection to the Moſaic hiſtory of the *long lives of the Antediluvians*, and the gigantic ſtature of ſome of the inhabitants of Paleſtine, may be eaſily paſſed without any anſwer; becauſe there is no contradiction in ſuppoſing it to be true, nor is it ſo very improbable that the ſtate of mankind may have been very different in former times from what it is at preſent.

The hiſtory of the *fall of man* is ſaid to have much the appearance of a fable. But it is ſufficient

cient for the purpoſe of revelation, if it be true in general, that the evils of the preſent ſtate were not introduced till the ſins of mankind made this ſtate of labour and death appear to be the fitteſt for them. The fabulous circumſtances may poſſibly have been introduced by the hieroglyphical manner in which that early hiſtory might be firſt written. But even the literal account may, in moſt particulars, have been true.

As to the hiſtory of tranſactions ſo much older than Moſes, ſo general an account as he has given of them might very well have been tranſmitted through the few generations which preceded him, or it might have been communicated to him by revelation. This, however, is not very probable, ſince Moſes no where aſſerts it; and he ſeems to be exceedingly exact in diſtinguiſhing all that he received from God, from what he relates of his own knowledge, or the information of others.

SECTION II.

Of the Objection to revelation from the ſuppoſed Inſpiration of the *ſcriptures, and others of a ſimilar nature.*

SOME objections to the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations are founded on ſmall inconſiſtencies, and miſtakes in the canonical books of ſcripture. But ſuch objections as theſe do not by any means affect the divinity of the ſyſtem of religion which they contain; becauſe the contents of thoſe books may be true *in the main*, notwithſtanding ſuch inconſiſtencies and miſtakes. All hiſtorians, even thoſe of the moſt approved credit, have been ſubject to ſmall inadvertencies and errors. No hiſtory of Rome or England was ever written without them; but, do we therefore ſay, that there is *no* truth in them. Nay, the diſcovery of ſuch ſmall miſtakes is never imagined to affect the credit of the important facts.

Allowing, therefore, that, in the books of Kings, a prince is ſaid to have reigned one number of years, and in the books of Chronicles another; that one of the Evangeliſts ſpeaks of *both the thieves* reviling Chriſt, whereas another ſays, that only *one* of them did it; that in one of the Goſpels Chriſt

Chriſt is repreſented as purging the temple on the day that he arrived at Jeruſalem, and that in another he is not ſaid to have done it till the day following (and unbelievers do not pretend to have found any miſtakes of more conſequence than theſe) how do they invalidate the truth of the general hiſtory? In reality, all ſuch inconſiſtencies as theſe are ſo far from making it probable that the whole ſtory is a fiction, that, according to the moſt eſtabliſhed methods of eſtimating the value of teſtimony, they give the greater air of truth to every particular of importance, in which they all agree. We ſee, in fact, that true hiſtory has always been written in the ſame manner, and without particular contrivance and combination, and conſequently without a very ſtrong ſuſpicion of falſehood. Hiſtories of the ſame period, and the ſame tranſactions, could not be written otherwiſe.

Admitting, therefore, that the Evangeliſts were miſinformed with reſpect to a variety of incidental circumſtances, or even that they overlooked, or did not ſufficiently attend to, ſome of ſuch particulars above-mentioned as might have fallen under their own obſervation, are theſe things of ſuch a nature, as to diſpoſe any perſon to call in queſtion the reality of the principal miracles, or their hiſtory of the death and reſurrection of Chriſt? And without this, the *proper evidence of chriſtianity* is not in the leaſt affected; becauſe, if theſe important

facts be true, we have ſtill abundant reaſon to believe, that Chriſt will come again to raiſe the dead, and judge the world, which is the great object and end of our chriſtian faith.

The evidence for the truth of all the facts which are related by the ſame hiſtorian is by no means equal; becauſe it will neceſſarily happen, that he will have a better opportunity of procuring authentic information concerning ſome of them than others. For this reaſon, the hiſtory of the infancy and childhood of Chriſt cannot be ſaid to be as unexceptionable as the hiſtory of his moſt important miracles; and unleſs theſe leading facts be diſproved, the religion of Jeſus Chriſt ſtands unſhaken.

As I think this conſideration of ſome conſequence to the evidence of chriſtianity, I ſhall exemplify my meaning, by referring my reader to the hiſtory of the *wiſe men*, who are ſaid to have come from the Eaſt, in order to pay their reſpects to the newborn Jeſus, directed by a miraculous light, in the form of a ſtar, and alſo to the hiſtory of the death and reſurrection of Chriſt. Both theſe hiſtories are related by the ſame Evangeliſt, Matthew; but the evidence of their truth is certainly very different, though both of them may be ſtrictly true. The former of them is related by Matthew only, who does not ſay that he could atteſt it from his own knowledge, or ſo much as intimate that he

was

was an eye-witneſs to any part of the tranſaction; ſo that it is probable, that he had it from the report of others, and of how many others, perhaps, in ſucceſſion, we cannot tell.

On the other hand, the hiſtory of the death and reſurrection of Chriſt is related by three other Evangeliſts, as well as by Matthew himſelf; and from the circumſtances of the facts, it appears that they muſt have been known to all the diſciples of Chriſt, and to almoſt the whole body of the Jewiſh nation; and, moreover, a great number of inconteſtable miracles were wrought by all the apoſtles, and other primitive Chriſtians, expreſsly in confirmation of the power and authority which was conferred upon Chriſt, and evidenced his reſurrection. When, therefore, the evidence for the hiſtory of the wiſe men is ſo very ſmall in compariſon of the evidence for the hiſtory of the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, the former may be given up (though it is by no means neceſſary to do it) without in the leaſt invalidating the evidence of the other.

When this manifeſt difference in point of evidence, with reſpect to facts related by the ſame Evangeliſts, ſhall be ſufficiently attended to, our faith in the great and leading facts in the hiſtory of Chriſt, from whence we are led to believe him to be a teacher ſent from God, and to expect his coming to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works, will ſtand much firmer,

and will not be liable to be ſhaken by the exceptions which unbelievers are apt to make to ſome inconſiderable circumſtances in the hiſtory of the Old or New Teſtament, the credibility of which is, in reality, of no moment whatever to the proper evidence of the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations.

Chriſtian divines having maintained the abſolute inſpiration of every word of the canonical books of ſcripture, has been attended with very bad conſequences, by laying the ſyſtem of revelation open to ſo many inſignificant, but plauſible objections; and this kind of inſpiration is as needleſs, as it is impoſſible to be maintained. Beſides, the inſpiration of the original writers would have anſwered no end, unleſs every tranſcriber, and every tranſlator of the books of ſcripture had been inſpired alſo; becauſe a failure of inſpiration in either of theſe caſes, would ſtill have been a ſource of error and miſtake. Small errors, and miſtakes of various kinds, are unavoidable in all writings; but ſince they are of no material conſequence, there was no reaſon for guarding againſt them, even in the firſt inſtance.

Let us, therefore, read the canonical books of ſcripture without expecting to find them perfectly unexceptionable in all the minutiæ of things. Let us conſider them as the productions of honeſt and faithful men, well informed concerning all the great things of which they write, but not equally informed

informed with reſpect to every punctilio they mention. Let us conſider the great truths which they deliver, as from God, to be divine, and worthy of our higheſt regard; but when they *argue* and *reaſon*, either from facts or revealed doctrines, advancing opinions which are plainly their own, and for which they do not pretend to have the authority of revelation, let us conſider them as the reaſonings and opinions of men in their ſituation, and with their means of information, which were in general very ample and ſufficient, but ſtill left them fallible, and treat them accordingly. St. Paul ſays expreſsly, that ſome of the things which he advanced were not from the Lord, but from himſelf only; and in other caſes the nature of the things will help us to diſtinguiſh between them.

Many of the objections which have been made to revelation, have ariſen from their ignorance of the manners and cuſtoms of the Jews, and other Aſiatic nations; and others from an ignorance of the climate and geography of the country; but as the antient manners and cuſtoms of the Eaſt have continued, with little or no change, to the preſent times, the travels which have of late been made into Judea, and the neighbouring countries, have been the means of bringing us better acquainted with them, and of removing the objections. Many happy illuſtrations of paſſages of ſcripture from travels into the Eaſt may be found in an excellent work, intitled

titled, *Obſervations on divers paſſages of ſcripture from voyages and travels into the Eaſt.*

Some objections to revelation are founded upon an ignorance of the *language* of the ſcriptures, and of the phraſeology which is almoſt peculiar to the oriental nations; and ſome unbelievers have been ſo exceedingly raſh and precipitate in their cenſures, as not to have looked beyond the very words, or verſes to which they have objected, when otherwiſe a child would have ſeen no difficulty.

M. Voltaire, in more than one of his pieces, repreſents the Jews as cannibals, and pretends to prove from Ez. xxxix. 17—20. that God encourages them with the promiſe of feeding on the fleſh of their enemies*. But if he had read ſo much as the verſe preceding, he muſt have ſeen that the whole paſſage was a fine apoſtrophe, addreſſed to the birds and beaſts of prey, and was intended to expreſs, in a very emphatical manner, a very great overthrow of the enemies of the Jews. *And thou ſon of man, Thus ſaith the Lord God, Speak thou unto every feathered fowl, and to every beaſt of the field, Aſſemble yourſelves, and come, gather yourſelves on every ſide to my ſacrifice, that I do ſacrifice for you, even a great ſacrifice upon the mountains of Iſrael, that ye may eat fleſh, and drink blood. Ye ſhall eat the fleſh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of*

* Traité ſur la Tolerance, p. 118.

bullocks,

bullocks, all of them fatlings of Baſhan. And ye ſhall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my ſacrifice which I have ſacrificed for you. Thus ye ſhall be filled at my table with horſes and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, ſaith the Lord God.

When, afterwards, this author acknowledges his miſtake, as he does in a poſtſcript to the above-mentioned treatiſe, he ſays, by way of apology for it, but contrary to all common ſenſe, that two of the verſes which I have recited might have been addreſſed to the Jews, as well as to the birds and beaſts. What can we think of the fairneſs and competency of judgment in this moſt diſtinguiſhed of modern unbelievers, when he is capable of writing in this very abſurd and unguarded manner.

SECTION III.

Some objections which more nearly affect the proper evidence *of revelation, eſpecially reſpecting the antient and preſent ſtate of the belief of it.*

IT has been ſaid by ſome modern unbelievers, that the books which were written by the early adverſaries of chriſtianity have been ſuppreſſed by the friends of it, ſo that we cannot at this day tell what was written againſt, or objected to chriſtianity,

ity, at the firſt promulgation of it. But this is an aſſertion deſtitute of all proof, or probability; for then all chriſtian writers muſt have carefully avoided the mention of ſuch books, in their own writings, which are come down to us; whereas, they have been ſo far from doing any thing like this, that it is the opinion of critics, that almoſt the whole of Celſus's treatiſe againſt chriſtianity is tranſcribed into Origen's anſwer to it, and a great part of Julian's into that of Cyril. Euſebius has alſo preſerved large extracts from the writings of Porphyry; and the ſame has been the conduct of other chriſtian apologiſts, with reſpect to other opponents of chriſtianity.

No perſons more ſincerely regret the loſs of theſe writings than learned chriſtians of the preſent age; but in the ſame undiſtinguiſhing ravages of time, have periſhed what we regret more, namely, the writings of many early chriſtians, and antient hiſtorians. Beſides, how could it, in reaſon, be expected, that chriſtians ſhould take any peculiar care of the writings of their adverſaries. If thoſe ſuppoſed writings had contained any thing *deciſive* againſt chriſtianity, they would certainly (conſidering the very great advantages under which they were written, for the ſpace of three hundred years) have effectually prevented the ſpread of chriſtianity, and would have preſerved themſelves; whereas the univerſal

univerſal neglect into which they fell is, if any thing, an argument of their futility, and furniſhes a reaſon why we ſhould comfort ourſelves for the loſs of them.

It has been ſaid, that if Chriſt worked ſo many miracles as the evangelical hiſtory repreſents, healing all the diſeaſed that applied to him, and in three inſtances raiſing the dead, he muſt neceſſarily have converted the whole Jewiſh nation, and all the ſtrangers in the country; as it could not but be concluded, that a man who controlled the courſe of nature muſt have the concurrence and aſſiſtance of the God of nature, and conſequently a ſufficient teſtimony of a divine miſſion.

To this it is replied, that the preaching of Chriſt ſeems to have had all the effect that it could be ſuppoſed to have had, admitting his divine miſſion. Great numbers of thoſe who were of an ingenuous diſpoſition, on whom evidence could produce its proper effect, did become the diſciples of Chriſt, notwithſtanding he perſiſted in diſclaiming all worldly honours, and that character which they imagined to be inſeparable from the promiſed Meſſiah; an effect which nothing but the fulleſt and beſt grounded conviction can be ſuppoſed to have produced.

With reſpect to the reſt of the Jews, and eſpecially the chief prieſts and rulers, it ſhould be conſidered how incredulous ſtrong prejudices, and eſpecially

eſpecially thoſe which ariſe from vicious habits, uſually make men. It was with the bulk of the Jews a fixed, though an erroneous perſuaſion, that the Meſſiah would aſſume temporal power, and deliver his country from the yoke of the Romans. This they imagined to be the ſpecific character of the Meſſiah, as deduced from prophecies which they were convinced came from God. To the evidence of miracles, therefore, they would oppoſe that of the ſcriptures, and, conſequently, the miracles of Moſes and the prophets, with which they ſeemed to be irreconcilable; and this, joined to their vicious habits, which rendered them extremely averſe to the pure doctrines of the goſpel, (having no idea that repentance was at all neceſſary to their being intitled to the bleſſings of the Meſſiah's kingdom, which they thought belonged to all the children of Abraham) muſt have rendered them extremely obdurate, with reſpect to the evidence of the divine miſſion of Chriſt; ſo that it is not to be wondered that ſo many of them perſiſted in their hatred and oppoſition to him, notwithſtanding all his miracles.

Unhappily, alſo, the Jews were at that time infected with the notion of the power of demons, and evil ſpirits, and thought it poſſible, that by a confederacy with them, Chriſt might heal thoſe diſeaſes which were uſually aſcribed to their power over mankind; and they had probably ſome

ſimilar

ſimilar method of accounting for the reſt of his miracles.

After the Phariſees and rulers of the Jews had obſerved how thoroughly exaſperated Jeſus was againſt them, how he expoſed all their pride and hypocriſy, and how little diſpoſed he was to ſhew them any favour, it is no wonder that they were determined to reject him *in any character*, thinking the Romans better maſters than ſuch a Meſſiah as he would be with reſpect to them. Thus their fears and their intereſt together would lead them to oppoſe Jeſus at all events, whether he was the Meſſiah or not. The more reaſonable and conſiderate among them might, however, be ſatisfied that God could not contradict himſelf, and that it was more probable that they had miſinterpreted the ſcriptures, than that the undeniable miracles of Jeſus were not proofs of an authority to which they ought to ſubmit.

With the modern Jews it ſhould be a ſufficient anſwer to this objection, that their anceſtors frequently oppoſed Moſes and the prophets, even perſecuting and killing ſome of them, notwithſtanding their allowed character of meſſengers from God.

To aſſiſt us to form a right judgment in this caſe, let us conſider what would be the probable effect of preaching againſt popery, even with the power of working miracles, in Spain or Portugal,

for

for the ſpace of a year and a few months, which appears to me to have been the period of Chriſt's public miniſtry. In theſe circumſtances, I ſhould think, that to expect the immediate reformation of the whole country, ſtrongly prejudiced as the people are known to be, would be to expect more than a juſt knowledge of human nature, and of the hiſtory of mankind would warrant. How many would there be who, not being in the way of the preacher, and not ſeeing the miracles themſelves, would give no attention whatever to any *reports* concerning them; and who, being ſatisfied within themſelves that the reports could not poſſibly be true, would obſtinately perſiſt in rejecting all evidence in their favour; and if theſe perſons, as would probably be the caſe, were men of rank, and diſtinguiſhed for their knowledge, it could not but have great influence upon the common people.

Upon the whole, it will hardly be thought improbable, that after ſuch a perſon had oppoſed the ſuperſtition of an ignorant and vicious people, and had laboured to throw down the falſe foundation of their hopes of future happineſs, they would endeavour to do by him as the Jews did by Chriſt. At moſt, his ſucceſs could not be ſuppoſed to be much greater in proportion.

As to the miracles of the apoſtles, the ſame motives, whatever they were, that led the Jews to oppoſe thoſe of Chriſt, would lead them to oppoſe theirs

heirs alſo; and the more, as they were now irritated by *oppoſition*, though the power of truth would make its way by degrees.

It is evident, that many of the moſt intelligent of the *Heathens*, eſpecially Marcus Antoninus, would not give any proper attention to any accounts of miracles, ſo many things of this kind having been reported, which, upon examination, appeared to be tricks or illuſions; though, had theſe men been ſatisfied that the courſe of nature had really been controlled, it cannot be ſuppoſed but that they muſt have been convinced of the interpoſition of the divine power and providence. Many of the Greeks and Romans, however, had a great opinion of the power of Magic, and, without conſidering the nature and circumſtances of the chriſtian miracles, ſuppoſed them to have been performed by ſome ſuch means.

If we conſider the ſtate of the Gentile world, and of chriſtianity in early times, we may very well account for the general rejection of it, without any impeachment of its truth.

The Gentiles in general could not reconcile the idea of the ignominious death of Chriſt with the great power which his diſciples aſcribed to him. The more opulent and politer part of them were alſo diſguſted, becauſe the firſt proſelytes to chriſtianity were generally of the lower ſort, and many of them ſlaves, whom they held in extreme contempt,

tempt, and with whom they could not bear the thought of aſſociating. The Greek philoſophers were exceedingly fond of their knowledge and eloquence, and diſdained to receive inſtruction from ſuch illiterate perſons as the apoſtles and the primitive chriſtians in general were. They were alſo exceedingly offended at the ſpirit of chriſtianity, as being at enmity with all other religions; they being of opinion that different modes of worſhip, and different religions, were even pleaſing to the Gods.

The leading men in all the heathen ſtates had a very high idea of the authority of the civil magiſtrate, and had always conſidered the buſineſs of religion as intirely ſubject to his controul; and therefore thought that the mere *obſtinacy* of the chriſtians, in refuſing to ſubmit to the laws, was, of itſelf, deſerving of capital puniſhment. In this manner Trajan reaſons in his anſwer to Pliny. Many of the Gentiles confounded the chriſtians with the ſects among the Jews, whom they held in contempt; and, therefore, they would not ſo much as give any attention to their preaching or miracles. The common people conſidered all thoſe who were enemies to their ſuperſtitions as *atheiſts*, and to this term the greateſt odium was ever annexed; and there are ſeveral proofs of their regarding the Epicureans, and the chriſtians in the ſame light. Beſides, Paganiſm had the advantage, which is common

common to every thing that has been long eſtabliſhed, the ſanction of *antiquity*; whereas chriſtianity was deſpiſed as a novel, and upſtart thing.

We are not, however, to ſuppoſe that all the impreſſion which the evidences of chriſtianity made on the minds of men, is to be eſtimated by the numbers of the declared converts to it, ſince many both of Jews and Gentiles entertained a favourable opinion of the goſpel, but were unwilling to own it for fear of cenſure, ridicule, and perſecution, and hoped that God would overlook it, provided they did nothing in direct oppoſition to chriſtianity, and did not themſelves join in the perſecution of chriſtians.

It ſtaggers ſome perſons, that there ſhould be ſo many unbelievers in the *preſent* age; but thoſe who know the world, and the circumſtances in which infidelity gains ground, will ſee nothing in it that is, in fact, unfavourable to the evidences of chriſtianity. It would be unjuſt to unbelievers to rank them all in the ſame claſs. I ſhall, therefore, endeavour to point out the different ſources of infidelity in the preſent age.

A great number of thoſe who profeſs to reject chriſtianity, are not only ſuch perſons as have never conſidered the ſubject, or indeed have a ſufficient ſtock of knowledge to examine it with proper attention, but they are alſo known to be, in general,

general, men of profligate lives and characters; and ſurely it cannot weigh much, with reaſonable and thinking men, that a thing is not believed by thoſe who are ſo circumſtanced, that they muſt neceſſarily be exceedingly prepoſſeſſed againſt the belief of it, and who are known, for that very reaſon, to have taken no pains to inform themſelves concerning it. I do not think that I ſhall be deemed uncharitable in concluding, that a very great majority of modern unbelievers are of this claſs. Many, however, I readily acknowledge, are of a different character; but theſe, I dare ſay, will agree with me in my cenſure of the reſt.

Others are men of fair and reputable characters, many of them men of taſte and ſcience, eſpecially in Popiſh countries, who, taking it for granted, that what paſſes for chriſtianity is really ſo, or who from a curſory inſpection of the books of ſcripture, conceive that ſome of the things related of God are unworthy of him, think it ſuperfluous to attend to any diſcuſſion of its hiſtorical evidence. They alſo ſee that the writers of the books of ſcripture have fallen into ſome inaccuracies, that their narration is not, in all reſpects, perfectly coherent with itſelf, or that the different accounts of the ſame tranſaction are not altogether conſiſtent with each other.

Theſe men of genius may diſcover ſome things that are frivolous or weak in the diſcourſes of the

the ſacred writers, and ſome things inconcluſive in their reaſoning, eſpecially in their quotations from, and their application of the Old Teſtament; and taking it for granted that (as indeed the profeſſors of chriſtianity have too generally and incautiouſly boaſted) the books which contain the hiſtory of our religion are as perfect as the religion itſelf, haſtily conclude, that becauſe the books of ſcripture were written by men, and bear the marks of human imperfection, therefore the ſcheme in which they were engaged was wholly of men, and had nothing ſupernatural in it; without reflecting that thoſe very imperfections in the books of ſcripture, at which they are ſo much offended, demonſtrate that the writers of them were incapable of contriving ſuch a ſcheme, or of procuring credit to it; and alſo without reflecting that, on the very ſame grounds, they might reject the whole current of antient hiſtory, no part of which has been written with perfect accuracy, uniformity, or even conſiſtency. For here, as in the ſcripture hiſtory, different hiſtorians agree in their accounts of the principal things only; but as certainly differ in their accounts of leſſer circumſtances.

Men of taſte and ſcience are alſo exceedingly apt to be ſtruck with the idea of what appears, on the firſt view, to be *rational* and *liberal* in their ſentiments, and remote from *vulgar prejudices*; and becauſe the bulk of mankind are, in many reſpects,

credulous, and often think very abſurdly, theſe gentlemen, though they will not avow it, and indeed may not be ſenſible of it, are ſecretly diſpoſed to reject what others admit, and to pride themſelves in their ſingularity in this reſpect; thinking it more great, noble, and philoſophical, to err on the ſide of incredulity; whereas they ought to conſider that the underſtandings of all mankind being naturally ſimilar, even the loweſt of the vulgar, when lying under no prejudice (and men of letters are ſubject to their peculiar prejudices as well as the illiterate) muſt be as capable of judging concerning *truth*, and eſpecially concerning *facts*, as themſelves; that their opinions, if they are not true, are founded upon ſomething analogous to truth, though the analogy may be faulty; and therefore are not to be rejected at random, but are themſelves an object worthy of philoſophical inveſtigation. A true philoſopher will no more ſatisfy himſelf without endeavouring to trace the riſe and progreſs of prevailing opinions, than without underſtanding the cauſe of any other *general appearance* in nature.

The opinion of men of letters, however, and of ſpeculative perſons of all kinds, will always have great weight with many who do not pretend to ſpeculation. As they will not take the pains to think for themſelves, they chuſe to think with *philoſophers* rather than with the *vulgar*; not conſidering that men of learning and genius, who are

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ever ſo capable of determining juſtly, have no advantage over the reſt of mankind, unleſs they will carefully *attend* to a ſubject, and make themſelves maſters of it; and that a politician might as well be expected to be an aſtronomer, or an aſtronomer a politician, as that a mere philoſopher ſhould be a competent judge of the evidence of chriſtianity, when his attention to them has been very ſuperficial, if he have attended to them at all.

I will not deny that ſome unbelievers are *ſerious* and *inquiſitive* men; they even wiſh to find chriſtianity to be true, and have ſome ſecret hope that it may be ſo; but they cannot fully ſatisfy themſelves with reſpect to many objections which they have heard made to it; ſo that the arguments in favour of it do not, at leaſt they do not always preponderate with them. Were a very great number of perſons in this ſituation, it would be a circumſtance, I readily own, that might afford a reaſonable foundation for doubt, or at leaſt for ſuſpence; but conſidering how very few theſe ſerious and inquiſitive unbelievers are, in compariſon with the numbers who are profligate and thoughtleſs among them, I think that no concluſion can be drawn from the conſideration of it, unfavourable to the evidences of chriſtianity. For what cauſe is there ſo good and ſo clear, as that *every perſon* can be brought to join in it.

Some of the perſons above-mentioned may have been much in the way of ſenſible and ſubtile unbelievers, to whoſe objections, through want of preſence of mind, or of a ſufficiently comprehenſive acquaintance with the ſubject, they have not been able readily to reply; or, being perſons of weak and timid diſpoſitions, they may have been led by their extreme anxiety to give more attention to the objections which have been thrown in their way than to the plain and ſolid arguments in favour of chriſtianity; on which account only the former may have made more impreſſion upon their minds than the latter; whereas if they had been more converſant with chriſtians and chriſtian writers, and leſs with unbelievers and their writings, they would have thought as well of the evidences of chriſtianity as of chriſtianity itſelf; objections which have been ſwelled into mountains in their imaginations, would have appeared no greater than mole-hills; and doubt and anxiety would never have invaded them. Beſides, it is true, I believe, in general, that the things at which well-diſpoſed minds ſtumble the moſt, are ſuch as ought to give them no offence, being quite foreign to chriſtianity, though unhappily they have been generally deemed to belong to it.

Having conſidered *who*, and *how many* of the preſent age are unbelievers, let it likewiſe be conſidered

ſidered if not how many, at leaſt *who* are the believers.

With reſpect to the *miniſters*, or profeſſed teachers of chriſtianity, I am well aware, it will be ſaid, that, beſides the prejudices of education in favour of their religion, in common with the bulk of the people, they are *gainers* by the ſyſtem, and therefore that they muſt be ſet aſide as of no weight in the caſe. I am very ready to own that, in theſe circumſtances, their mere *profeſſion* of chriſtianity has no weight, becauſe it is conſiſtent with real infidelity; but allowing them to be men of ſenſe, ſtudy, and inquiry, and withal men of fair moral characters, their *ſincere belief*, of chriſtianity certainly has *ſome* weight, eſpecially in caſes in which the gains of the profeſſion do not place them much above the common level of their fellow citizens.

Study and inquiry cannot but be allowed to be, in ſome meaſure, a balance to the prejudices of education; beſides that, in numberleſs caſes, this prejudice is much more than balanced by an oppoſite one, which is peculiarly incident to ſtudious and learned men, viz. the affectation of being thought wiſer than our anceſtors, and free from vulgar prejudices. As to the emoluments of the chriſtian miniſtry, they are not ſo great as to be ſufficient, in other caſes, to induce an equal number of men, in ſimilar circumſtances, to wiſh to ac-

quire them by the habitual and conſtant profeſſion of a falſhood.

Setting aſide the great dignitaries in the church of Rome or of England, many clergymen, in the latter of theſe eſtabliſhments eſpecially, who have had no great preferment in the church, men of reading and underſtanding, have written very able defences of chriſtianity.

If it be ſaid, that theſe men, though but poorly provided for at the time in which they wrote, might have conſiderable *expectations*, and that ſeveral of them did, in fact, attain to great preferment in the church, in conſequence of their defences of chriſtianity, this cannot be ſaid of thoſe *diſſenting miniſters* who have defended the ſame cauſe with equal zeal, and not leſs ability. What advantage did Foſter, Leland, or Lardner gain by the important ſervices which they rendered the chriſtian cauſe? The two former, if I have been rightly informed, died poor, and the laſt, beſides almoſt the whole of a very long life, ſpent a conſiderable part of his own independent fortune in the publication of his works.

If the evidence of ſuch men as theſe muſt be ſet aſide, nothing, ſurely, worth replying to, can be objected to the belief and defence of chriſtianity by ſuch men as Locke, Newton, or Hartley; all men of ſober minds, in no other reſpect the dupes of vulgar prejudice, leaſt of all thoſe of education; all

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of them men of ſtrict virtue and integrity, all of them men of the firſt-rate abilities, the two latter of them eſpecially, infinitely ſuperior to any of the advocates for infidelity. Theſe men gave the cloſeſt attention to the ſubject, and they were maſters of all the previous knowledge that is requiſite to form a competent judgment in the caſe. They certainly could have no views of intereſt in their profeſſion or defences of chriſtianity; and, as men of letters, would probably have gained, rather than have loſt any thing, in point of general eſtimation, by eſpouſing the cauſe of infidelity. For it can hardly be denied, that the works of ſuch men as Mr. Hume and Voltaire, have been much more read and admired in conſequence of their being unbelievers, than they would otherwiſe have been.

It is not eaſy, for want of a ſufficient knowledge of antient and diſtant countries, to compare the ſtate of the belief of Judaiſm and of chriſtianity with that of any ſyſtem of heatheniſm or Mohammedaniſm, which are deemed to be falſe both by believers and unbelievers of chriſtianity; but as far as we are able to make this compariſon, all the concluſion that can be drawn from it is certainly in favour of the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions. It will not be pretended that ſo much as one philoſopher, or man of letters, was a ſerious believer of any *pagan ſyſtem*, notwithſtanding their oppoſition

to chriſtianity at its firſt promulgation. In Mohammedan countries there is at preſent very little reading or ſtudy, and if we be not miſinformed by ſome late travellers, thoſe who are addicted to ſtudy, or who have any thing of a ſpeculative turn, are generally ſuppoſed to be unbelievers. However, nothing written againſt their religion was ever read or heard of in any Mohammedan country.

Upon the whole, I think we may conclude, at leaſt fairly preſume, that no impoſture has ever ſtood ſuch a teſt as chriſtianity has already ſtood, without being exploded; and notwithſtanding the ſpread of infidelity at preſent, yet, conſidering among whom it ſpreads, and who they are that oppoſe the ſpread of it, it can hardly be doubted, by an indifferent ſpectator, but that the belief of chriſtianity, ſo far from being in any danger of becoming extinct, will maintain its ground, and continue to be the ſerious belief of the virtuous, the ſober-minded, and the learned of the preſent and future ages; and this will be an omen of its finally triumphing over all oppoſition, and of the belief of its coming at length to be univerſal, and undiſputed.

Sincere chriſtians have no more reaſon to be ſhocked at the prevalence of infidelity in the preſent age, than at the prevalence of *evils* in general, or of *vice* in particular. There can be no doubt but

but that evils of every kind anſwer the beſt of purpoſes in the ſyſtem of God's moral government, and that they are a very important part of that moſt admirable *diſcipline*, by which mankind are training up to the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue. Nor do I think that it requires any great depth of judgment, or knowledge of human nature, to perceive this.

Suppoſing it to be the intention of any perſon to form a proper number of truly great, excellent, and generous minds, he muſt place them in a world not leſs abounding with calamity, and even with vice, than this. There could be no dependence either upon the *genuineneſs*, or the *ſtability* of that virtue which had not been formed, and exerciſed, in ſuch circumſtances.

In like manner, the moſt rational and the moſt ſteady believer in chriſtianity, is the man who has heard and conſidered all the ſerious objections that unbelievers can make to it, and who has alſo been expoſed to the ridicule with which it is treated by thoſe who have the reputation of men of ſenſe, and of being free from vulgar prejudices. The man who has paſſed through this trial, whoſe faith has not been ſhaken, but has been more firmly eſtabliſhed by the reaſonings of unbelievers; who has not been made aſhamed of his profeſſion by the ridicule and contempt to which it has expoſed him, but who can be content to be ranked among the

fools and *narrow minded* by the celebrated free-thinkers of the age, in a firm belief of, and patient waiting for that day, which ſhall *confound the wiſdom of the* now reputed *wiſe*, is a chriſtian of a higher rank, and greater value, and is more to be depended upon for acting a truly chriſtian part (which requires ſuperiority of mind to this world, and to the vain purſuits and tranſitory emoluments of it) than the man who has only been taught to take the ſyſtem for granted, and who is unacquainted with the proper evidence on which his faith reſts.

Moreover, as thoſe who believe in the perfect moral government of God entertain no doubt, but that all calamity and vice will be made to ceaſe, when they have anſwered the purpoſes for which they were permitted to exiſt; ſo the chriſtian looks forward with joy to that time, when the religion of Chriſt ſhall triumph over all oppoſition, when the firm belief of it will be univerſal, and when, in conſequence of this, being more deeply rooted in men's hearts, it will bring forth the proper fruits of it in their lives and converſation.

When theſe things are duly conſidered, I hope that the preſent ſtate of the belief of chriſtianity will afford no juſt foundation for any objection to it, but that it will rather ſupply an argument in favour of it.

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SECTION IV.

Miſcellaneous objections to the ſyſtem of revelation.

THE *want of univerſality* can be no objection to the truth of chriſtianity; but upon the ſuppoſition of the knowledge of it being abſolutely neceſſary to the final happineſs of men, which is denied by all rational chriſtians, who believe that all men will be judged according to the advantages which they have ſeverally enjoyed, for attaining to the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue; and conſequently that the moſt ignorant and idolatrous heathen may meet with more favour from his judge than many profeſſing chriſtians, whoſe conduct, though, to outward appearance, it has been much better, yet not in proportion to their greater advantages.

It is greatly favourable to chriſtianity, and indeed almoſt peculiar to it, that it ſhews no favour to chriſtians as ſuch. The bigotted Jews and the Mohammedans denounce anathemas againſt unbelievers as ſuch, and ſuppoſe that the wicked among them will be more reſpected by God hereafter than the reſt of mankind, whereas the goſpel ſpeaks quite another language. To thoſe who ſay *Lord*, *Lord*, without ſubmitting to the laws of Chriſt, he

will reply at the laſt, *Verily, verily, I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity.* It is alſo one of his maxims, that *he who knows his Lord's will and does it not, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes.* To the ſame purpoſe, likewiſe, do the apoſtles write.

Some perſons have objected to the evidences of chriſtianity, but certainly without ſufficient reaſon, the *differences of opinion* among chriſtians, ſince the very ſame objection may be made to natural religion, and indeed to every thing that has ever been imagined of ſo much *importance*, as to engage much of the *attention* of mankind, the conſequence of which has always been different conceptions concerning it. Were not the diſciples of Socrates, Ariſtotle, and Plato, divided among themſelves? Are there not as many ſects among the Mohammedans, as among the chriſtians? And are there not almoſt as many different opinions among the Papiſts, as among the Proteſtants, notwithſtanding they profeſs to be poſſeſſed of an infallible judge in all controverſies of faith? Do not even our ableſt lawyers give different opinions concerning the ſenſe of acts of parliament, which were intended to convey the moſt determinate meaning, ſo as to obviate all cavils? Nay, have we not equal reaſon to expect that unbelievers ſhould agree in the ſame ſyſtem of unbelief? If they ſay to us, Agree firſt among yourſelves, and tell us what chriſtianity is, and we will tell you what we have

to

to object to it; we have a right to reply, Do you agree firſt with reſpect to what you ſuppoſe to be wrong in it, tell us what you object to, and we will then conſider of the proper anſwer.

In fact, every unbeliever muſt read the New Teſtament for himſelf. If, when he is uninfluenced by any criminal prejudice, he really cannot give his aſſent to what he believes to be the religion of thoſe books, he will be juſtified in his unbelief; but if he have taken up his notions of chriſtianity from others, or from an examination of his own, inadequate to the importance of the ſubject, he certainly cannot be juſtified. I, for my own part, can only exhibit what appears to me the true idea of chriſtianity, and the moſt rational defence of it. If any other perſon, believer or unbeliever, think it to be exceptionable, he muſt look out for another, that to himſelf ſhall appear leſs ſo, and I alſo ſhall think myſelf at liberty to relinquiſh my notions, and adopt his.

It is highly unreaſonable to object to chriſtianity the various *miſchiefs* which it has indirectly occaſioned in the world, ſince there is nothing uſeful or excellent that has not had ſimilar conſequences. By this method of reaſoning, it might be concluded with certainty, that our *paſſions* and affections were not the gift of God, for they are daily the cauſe of great and ſerious evils. In fact, the more important any thing is, and the more extenſive and happy

are

are its conſequences, the greater, in general, are the evils which it occaſionally produces.

This is remarkably the caſe with *civil government*. It is certainly far preferable to a ſtate of anarchy, and yet it gives occaſion to a multitude of crimes, and ſuch horrid exceſſes of all the paſſions as cannot be known in uncivilized countries.

The perſecution of chriſtians by chriſtians, has not been worſe than the perſecution of chriſtians by ſuch heathen emperors as Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius, not to mention Nero or Diocletian; and has, beſides, moſt evidently ariſen from a groſs perverſion of the genuine ſpirit of chriſtianity, which breathes nothing but forbearance and love. There is alſo a view in which all theſe evils may be conſidered as highly favourable to the evidences of chriſtianity, ſince they were diſtinctly foreſeen and foretold by Chriſt and the apoſtles. Beſides, when we conſider the havock that has been made by chriſtian perſecutors, we ſhould alſo conſider the laudable zeal of the many who favoured and ſheltered thoſe who were perſecuted.

To make a juſter eſtimate of the moral influence of chriſtianity, let us conſider with impartiality the character of the preſent times. Was Europe leſs corrupt a century ago, when there were fewer unbelievers, than it is now, that they are more numerous? It is plain from experience and obſervation, that the moſt vicious and abandoned of the preſent

preſent age are profeſſed unbelievers, and that the moſt ſtrictly virtuous, thoſe who are the moſt ſtrenuous in their oppoſition to the progreſs of vice, are profeſſing and zealous chriſtians. Let it alſo be conſidered whether any more humane and enlarged ſentiments were entertained before the promulgation of chriſtianity in heathen countries. Now, whatever may be ſaid in favour of the virtuous and humane ſentiments of the heathen philoſophers, it cannot be pretended that they exerted their eloquence in favour of toleration for the poor perſecuted chriſtians. On the contrary, they generally exerted their influence to make them ridiculous and odious. The moderation of the preſent times is certainly owing both to the unbelievers and the Proteſtants, and both were perhaps led into it by the conſideration of their own circumſtances, as the weaker party.

It is plain from fact, that it was not the intention of the divine being, by means of natural or revealed religion, of any kind of knowledge, or any other advantage of which we are poſſeſſed, to eſtabliſh a ſtate of univerſal virtue and happineſs in the preſent world. In all the divine diſpenſations we are treated as accountable or improveable creatures; but it is evidently neceſſary to ſuch a ſtate, that we be capable of growing worſe as well as better, by every ſpecies of diſcipline; and the very ſame circumſtances may produce both theſe different

rent effects on the minds of different perſons. The ſame proſperity that excites ſentiments of gratitude, and a liberal beneficent diſpoſition in ſome, inſpires others with inſolence, rapaciouſneſs, and cruelty; adverſity alſo may be the parent either of induſtry, or fraud; ſo that neither of them has neceſſarily and invariably a good effect upon the mind. The diſpenſation of the goſpel, therefore, may be ſimilar to this, without any impeachment of its divine original.

The evidence of truth may alſo come under the ſame rules with the means of virtue, and thus the arguments in favour of divine revelation may be ſufficient to convince the candid, impartial, and well-diſpoſed, at the ſame time that they may afford thoſe who are of a different diſpoſition handles enow for cavilling, ſuch as, in their ſtate of mind, will juſtify their rejection of it to themſelves. To this our Lord might poſſibly allude when he ſaid, John ix. 39. *For judgment I am come into this world: that they who ſee not, might ſee; and that they who ſee, might be made blind*; and, John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf.* To the ſame purpoſe is the prophecy of Simeon, Luke ii. 34. *Behold, this child is ſet for the fall and riſing again of many in Iſrael; and for a ſign which ſhall be ſpoken againſt.*

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It is often taken for granted that the deſign of revelation in general, and of chriſtianity in particular, was ſimply *to reform the world*, and that end not having been completely anſwered by it, it has been objected by unbelievers, that it could not have been from God, who would certainly have choſen ſufficient means to gain all his ends. But, conſidering that men are accountable creatures, and capable of abuſing every advantage of which they are poſſeſſed, both reaſon and revelation do, in fact, in all caſes, anſwer the end for which they were given, whether they be abuſed or improved, whether, as the apoſtle Paul ſays, they be *a ſavour of life unto life, or of death unto death.*

I ſhall conclude theſe obſervations on the difficulties which attend the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, with remarking, that the queſtion is not whether any of the particulars I have mentioned, ſeparately taken, be likely or unlikely to come from God, but whether *the whole ſyſtem*, attended with ſuch difficulties, may be divine. If it were poſſible that any perſon ſhould be aſked, *a priori*, whether it was probable that, under the government of a wiſe and good being, an innocent child ſhould inherit the diſeaſes, poverty, and vices of its parent, or whether no diſtinction would be made between the righteous and the wicked in war, peſtilence, famine, or earthquakes, he would certainly anſwer it was not probable; though when he

he ſhould come to know, and attentively conſid the whole ſyſtem, of which ſuch events make part, he might be ſatisfied that it was the reſu of perfect wiſdom, directed by infinite goodnes and even that a ſcheme more favourable to happ neſs or virtue could not have been formed; a the time may come, when we ſhall know and a knowledge the ſame with reſpect to the *extraor nary* that we do with reſpect to the *ordinary* diſpe ſations of the divine being.

The advantage which chriſtianity derives fro the objections of unbelievers, is various and co ſiderable. This circumſtance has been the mea of purging it from what was foreign and indefe ſible, and alſo of ſetting its evidences in a clea and ſtronger light; ſo that many perſons who b fore took their religion upon truſt, do now adh to it upon a rational conviction of its truth a excellence, and hold it in greater purity than th would otherwiſe have done. And as the heath philoſophy contributed to diſcredit the popular ligions of the Gentile world, which ſerved a preparation for the promulgation of the goſpel, the writings and diſcourſes of unbelievers in preſent age ſeem to be ſapping the foundations the Popiſh corruptions of chriſtianity, and p paring the way for the eſtabliſhment of the pure ligion of Chriſt in their place.

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Chriſtianity, after having ſtood ſuch a trial as this, will no more be expoſed to ſuch virulent attacks as before, but will acquire ſuch a *fixed character of truth*, as it could never have obtained without the oppoſition which it has met with. Such has been the fate of all the branches of true philoſophy, of the Copernican ſyſtem, the Newtonian theory of light and colours, and the Franklinian theory of electricity.

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THE CONCLUSION.

IT is in vain to ſay any thing by way of addreſs to perſons who will not read or think upon a ſubject. To the profligate and unthinking among the unbelievers I ſhall, therefore, ſay nothing, becauſe they will not give themſelves the trouble to read what I might be diſpoſed to ſay to them; but to the more *moral, ſpeculative*, and *thoughtful* unbelievers, into whoſe hands this treatiſe may poſſibly fall, I would obſerve, and they muſt agree with me in it, that, in juſtice to themſelves and to the ſubject, they ſhould give it the moſt ſerious and deliberate examination. To men of reaſon and reflection the evidences of chriſtianity muſt appear the moſt intereſting of all ſubjects of inquiry. For what can be more ſo than fully to aſcertain, that the preſent ſtate is not the whole of our exiſtence, but that Jeſus Chriſt, by the appointment of God his father, will come again to raiſe all the dead to a future endleſs life, and to give to every man according to his works. This is the great object and end of chriſtian faith; and thoſe who believe this important doctrine receive it on the authority of Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe divine miſſion was atteſted, as they believe, by ſuch miracles

racles as no man could have performed, without the preſence and concurrence of God.

Now before any perſon ſeriouſly rejects chriſtianity, containing ſuch important doctrines, he ſhould certainly endeavour to ſatisfy himſelf, at leaſt on what foundation it is that he founds his diſſent; and that ſuch perſons may more eaſily and effectually interrogate themſelves upon the ſubject, I ſhall briefly propoſe a few leading queſtions, which may perhaps aſſiſt them to aſcertain the ſtate of their own minds, and lead them to ſuch reflections, or diſquiſitions, as may be of moſt uſe to them with reſpect to it; at the ſame time that they may ſerve as a kind of *recapitulation* of a few of the principal arguments in favour of chriſtianity.

Is it not an indiſputed fact, that there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate in Judea?

Is it not alſo a well known fact, that he had ſome followers when living, but, notwithſtanding his ignominious ſufferings, which diſconcerted and diſperſed all his adherents, many more after his death; and that he was even acknowledged by them to be the Meſſiah, foretold by their antient prophets, though he ſuſtained a character the very reverſe of what was expected by all the Jews, the good as well as the bad?

Are not the *goſpels*, and the book of *Acts*, which contain the hiſtory of the life of Chriſt, and of the propa-

propagation of his religion in the world, authentic writings? Were they not conſidered in all the early ages, both by the friends and enemies of chriſtianity, as the genuine productions of the early diſciples of Chriſt?

Can this be admitted, without admitting alſo, that what they relate concerning Chriſt and his apoſtles is, in the main, true, at leaſt that they did ſomething above the power of man; eſpecially, that Chriſt did actually riſe from the dead, as he had foretold, and as a proof that what he taught he had by commiſſion from God?

Is it probable that ſuch men as the apoſtles were, ſhould have been able to ſhake off the ſtrongeſt Jewiſh prejudices, which no other Jews, whether, with reſpect to morality, they were good or bad men, were ever able to do? Can they be ſuppoſed capable of inventing ſuch a ſtory, and eſpecially of making it gain credit with the world, in ſuch an age as that in which they lived, and circumſtanced as they were for that purpoſe?

Admitting this to be poſſible, can any ſufficient *motive* be aſſigned, to induce ſo many of them, not only to enter into a ſcheme of this nature, but, what is much more, to carry it on, with a perſeverance unknown to the profeſſors of any ſcheme of religion before them, in the face of all difficulties that could be thrown in their way, and to die

with

with all the marks of joy and confidence, without ever confeſſing the impoſture?

If the leading facts above-mentioned cannot be diſputed, except upon ſuch principles as muſt invalidate all antient hiſtory, and ſet aſide all human teſtimony, every argument *a priori*, ſuch as thoſe which ariſe from the conſideration of the ſufficiency of the light of nature, the natural incredibility of miracles, &c. will certainly not deſerve a hearing. How ſpecious ſoever they may be repreſented, their influence will not be felt.

It will be clearly perceived that, whether it might have been reaſonable to expect it, or not, God who made the world has *actually* interpoſed at various times in the government of it; giving ſome of his creatures, at leaſt, ſuch information reſpecting their conduct here, and their expectations hereafter, as he judged to be uſeful and convenient for them; and whatever difficulties may attend the ſpeculative conſideration of a future life, it will not be doubted but that we ſhall *in fact* live again, give an account of ourſelves to God, and receive according to our works.

APPEN-

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

AN ESSAY

ON THE

Analogy between the methods by which the perfection and happineſs of men are promoted, according to the diſpenſations of natural *and* revealed *religion.*

THE perfection of intelligent beings conſiſts in *comprehenſion of mind*, or that principle whereby ideas of the paſt and the future mix with thoſe of the preſent, and excite one common ſenſation; in which the good and evil ſo perfectly coaleſce, and are ſo intimately united, that the *medium* only is perceived. Conſequently, if happineſs be apprehended to prevail, in that portion of time of which we have this perfect comprehenſion, and every part of which may be ſaid to be *preſent* to us, we are conſcious of pleaſure only in the contemplation of it, the pain being loſt, and abſorbed, together with ſo much pleaſure as was

 equivalent

equivalent to it. By this means happineſs comes to be of a more ſtable nature; and it is leſs in the power of ſingle accidents to produce a ſenſe of miſery.

If we have any reaſon to think that our exiſtence will, upon the whole, be comfortable and happy; ſince (man being immortal) our happineſs muſt be infinite upon the whole, though it be limited and finite at any particular time, the thought is ſo great and ſo glorious, that the full apprehenſion of it muſt contribute ſtill more to overpower the ſenſe of any preſent evils, and give ſuch an intenſeneſs to all pleaſurable feelings, as cannot fail to make our preſent ſtate unſpeakably more eligible than it could otherwiſe have been.

Such is the conſtitution of human nature, and ſuch are the influences to which we are expoſed in this world, that this comprehenſion of mind muſt neceſſarily be enlarged with the experience of every day. Infants are ſenſible of nothing but what paſſes in the preſent moment. The inſtant that the impreſſion of actual pain is removed, they are perfectly eaſy in mind, not being diſturbed either with the remembrance of the paſſed, or the apprehenſion of the future. By degrees, ideas, which have frequently been preſent to the perceptive power, at the ſame time, begin to be aſſociated; ſo that one of them cannot occur without introducing the other, and ſo making the perception complex. By this

this means *expectation* begins to awake in the infant mind; but ſtill, from the moment that, by the intervention of an aſſociated circumſtance, the idea of any pleaſure is conceived, the child is impatient till it be enjoyed. Indeed, it is generally ſeveral months before children ſhow the leaſt ſign of patience in waiting for any thing. The moſt evident ſigns of preparing to give them food, ſerve only to quicken their appetite, and their impatience to get it ſatisfied; nor are they eaſy, till the meat be actually in their mouths.

In this ſtate, therefore, or at our entrance upon life, we are influenced almoſt wholly by ſenſation, or the actual impreſſion of external objects upon our ſenſes. But when traces of theſe impreſſions, i. e. *ideas* are left in the ſenſorium, which may be excited by other ideas aſſociated with them, ſo that notices of things may be had without the preſence of real objects, we are capable of being influenced by them, as well as by the objects themſelves. And ſince the ſtock of our ideas increaſes without limits, and is accumulating through the whole courſe of our lives, we muſt be continually more and more actuated by them; and there will be leſs occaſion for the preſence of external objects, either to rouſe us to action, or to give us the ſenſe of pleaſure or pain; that is, we grow more intellectual, and leſs ſenſual every day.

When our ſtock of ideas is become conſiderable, and, conſequently, their mutual aſſociations are pretty extenſive and intimate; if the circumſtances that have always been found to precede any gratification be perceived, the gratification itſelf is immediately anticipated; we look upon it as certain, and have a real enjoyment of it, though it be not preſent. In this caſe, when the gratification actually comes, it makes but little alteration in what we feel, and is but a ſmall addition to our previous happineſs; which now depends chiefly upon ideas, which are continually increaſing, and to which external ſenſations bear, every day, a leſs and leſs proportion.

The probable expectation of happineſs hath a ſimilar effect: and hence the great power of mere *hope* to leſſen the evils of life, and make us bear up under great difficulties and trials. If any pleaſure hath been abſolutely depended upon, for a long ſpace of time, the happineſs we have experienced in the frequent contemplation of it, may far exceed that of the enjoyment, which is ſingle and momentary, and, moreover, accompanied with the diſagreeable idea of its being ſo. For the ſame reaſon, the fear of evil may, in time, be far more diſtreſſing and grievous than the evil itſelf. The man who loſes a limb by a ſudden accident is to be envied, in compariſon of him who hath been ſentenced to that loſs, as a puniſhment, ſome months before the operation,

operation. In like manner, if two perſons be confined in priſon, and one of them be releaſed without any previous expectation of ſo agreeable an event, while the other knew that he was to be confined only for the ſame limited time; the former will feel more tumultuous joy upon the occaſion, but the latter will have had the idea of it preſent to his mind, during the whole time of his confinement, ſweetening all the bitterneſs of it, and will never have known the diſtreſs of uncertainty, or the agony of deſpair.

When ideas only are concerned, and not both ideas and ſenſations, the influence of hope and fear is much more diſtinctly perceived, and the nature of this comprehenſion of mind will be better underſtood by it. Inſtead, then, of putting a caſe in which we ourſelves are concerned, let us put the caſe of a wife, a child, or any other near relation, or friend, with whom we can truly ſympathiſe, taking part in all their joys and ſorrows. If we ſee them in priſon, and, after apprehending that their confinement will be for life, have private information that they will be releaſed, and placed in very agreeable circumſtances in a few days, weeks, or months; we can ſee them in the mean time, even though we are not allowed to communicate our intelligence to them, with joy almoſt unmixed; becauſe the future is realized, and the agreableneſs of it heightened in our ideas by its contraſt with the preſent;

which, being temporary, is overlooked by us, as nothing, and has not power to damp our ſatiſfaction.

If my child be peeviſh and obſtinate, and I be ſenſible that pain and mortification will do him good, I can, without the help of much anger, have a kind of ſatisfaction in inflicting it, and have little or no ſympathy with what he ſuffers; though, for a time, he be in agony of diſtreſs, and think very unkindly of me. On the other hand, if I foreſaw that he would loſe a limb in a few days, weeks, or months, I ſhould look upon him in the mean time with a moſt painful compaſſion, notwithſtanding he himſelf ſhould be ever ſo happy, and enjoy himſelf ever ſo much; nay, the want of apprehenſion and feeling in him, would ſharpen their painful effects in me.

The effect is nearly the ſame if, with reſpect to ourſelves, impreſſions from the external ſenſes be left out of the queſtion, and a caſe be put, that is purely intellectual. Suppoſe, for inſtance, my character be unjuſtly traduced, and, for a time, I be reckoned a moſt infamous ſcoundrel; yet, if I be certain, that in a few days my innocence will be effectually cleared, ſo that no perſon whatever will entertain the leaſt doubt of it, ſhall I, in the mean time, be affected and mortified, with the ſenſe of my diſgrace? No, I ſhall hardly feel it at all;

all; but ſhall rather ſecretly exult in the future triumph of my innocence, and ſhall ſhow an unabaſhed and chearful countenance, till the preſent load of infamy be removed. It muſt be owned, however, that the ſenſe of infamy, in this caſe, will be felt more or leſs, according to the degree of comprehenſion of mind to which we are arrived, and alſo that we ſhall be able to bear unjuſt ſcandal for a longer or ſhorter ſpace of time in the ſame proportion.

The ſame obſervation may alſo be made with reſpect to all the caſes mentioned above. Thus it is that, by this power of comprehenſion, we are able to balance one idea or ſenſation with another, whether they be of the ſame, or of different kinds. With this reſource, a good man, conſcious of his own integrity, grows every day leſs ſenſible to the cenſures of men, conſoling himſelf with the approbation of his own mind, and the perſuaſion that he enjoys the favour of his maker; till, after ſufficient experience, this juſt ſenſe of things will make him almoſt wholly indifferent, on his own account, to every thing that the world can think or ſay of him.

A certain degree of this comprehenſion of mind, employed about proper objects, is ſufficient to make a man virtuous through the whole courſe of his life. To arrive at this, nothing is wanting, but a diſtinct and ready apprehenſion of all the ill conſe-

quences of vice, and of all the good effects of virtue. For, as ſoon as, by this extended power of aſſociation, we perceive vice, with all that accompanies and follows it, as *one undivided thing*, and the virtues, with all their train, as one undivided thing likewiſe, the ſuperiority of the latter, upon the whole, is ſo great, that no man could heſitate a moment which to prefer. It is only by partial views of things that we are impoſed upon, are bewildered, and confounded in our choice. When, in conſequence of acting for ſome time with this clear and ſteady view of things, virtuous conduct is become habitual, the pains and difficulties of a virtuous courſe abſolutely vaniſh, and are abſorbed in the ſenſe of the infinitely greater good we hereby inſure to ourſelves. In this caſe, even the pleaſures of vice would be ſhunned with abhorrence, becauſe we could never ſeparate from them the idea of the infinitely greater pains, with which they are cloſely connected.

In matters to which we are much accuſtomed, this comprehenſion of mind, and coaleſcence of ideas, is remarkably ready and complete. A perſon who has been much converſant in buſineſs and accounts, and who every day meets with gains or loſſes, is affected juſt as the balance of the profits would have affected him, if he had never heard of the particulars. A perſon who is leſs converſant

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in theſe things would feel his mind as it were, vibrate between both, and would longer perceive their ſeparate effects.

The power of habit, in promoting a perfect coaleſcence of aſſociated ideas, is moſt remarkable in caſes where the external ſenſes are concerned. The moon, when near the horizon, ſeems to be conſiderably larger than it does when it is near the meridian; but this can be owing to nothing but the effect of habit, in conſequence of having frequently compared its apparent magnitude with thoſe of the intermediate objects: for its picture upon the retina is well known to be of the ſame dimenſions, and therefore a child, or a perſon wholly without experience, could not imagine any difference in them. Nay, it is evident, from the laws of optics, that originally all objects appear to be in the ſame plane, and that it is from experience, or habit, that we firſt get the idea of diſtance, or of any dimenſion beſides length and breadth.

Again, it is probable, that all objects appear double to every perſon, till, by experience, we find the miſtake, and then learn to conceive of impreſſions, made upon two correſponding points of the retina, as referring but to one object. However, ſo abſolutely fixed is our *judgment*, (for ſuch only it evidently is originally) that the moon is larger near the horizon, and that the appearance of two objects is, in reality, no more than that of one, that

we are now even puzzled to account for the fact. Perhaps like obſervations might be made concerning our other ſenſes.

All theſe caſes are remarkable inſtances of the power of aſſociation, and demonſtrate a poſſibility, not only that an *idea*, but even a *ſenſation* may ceaſe to appear to be what it originally was; yea, that it may be ſo intimately connected with, and abſolutely loſt in aſſociated ideas only, as to be no longer capable of being reſolved back again into its former ſtate.

Another thing worthy of our notice in theſe facts is, that this amazing effect is accompliſhed in a limited time, even pretty early in life; for no perſon can remember the time when objects appeared to him otherwiſe than they do now.

Do not theſe plain, but ſtriking facts, teach us to conceive, how poſſible it is, that any ideas whatever may be ſo entirely coaleſced by aſſociation, that the components parts of the whole image ſhall abſolutely diſappear, and never more be ſeen in the ſame light in which they were originally viewed. Thus, all ideas of pain may, at length, perfectly unite with thoſe of the pleaſures which they have accompanied, or to which they have been ſubſervient; and when once the general aſſociation, founded on the connection of good and evil, pleaſure and pain, obſerved through all nature, is firmly

eſtabliſhed

eſtabliſhed (like the fixing of the correſponding points in the retina) not even the moſt ſudden appearance of evil will be able to affect the mind with the idea of any thing but what is right and deſirable upon the whole, any more than two images, one in each eye, though ever ſo unexpectedly impreſſed, are not able, even for a moment, or by ſurpriſe, to give us the idea of two objects; though this was always the caſe in our infancy, and would be ſo ſtill without aſſociation of ideas. If ever our minds ſhould arrive at the perfect ſtate here hinted at, all the works of God, and all the events of divine providence, will conſtantly appear to us as they do to the divine being himſelf, i. e. perfectly and infinitely good, without the leaſt perceivable mixture of evil.

In what time it is even poſſible to effect all this, cannot, with the leaſt certainty, be ſo much as conjectured: for though we cannot remember objects appearing to us in any other manner than they now do; yet as theſe aſſociations of viſible ideas muſt have been impreſſed every time we opened our eyes, from the time that we began to take notice of things; we muſt conclude, that this operation cannot but require a very long and ſteady application of mind. Temporary pains and evils of all kinds, muſt be very clearly and ſatisfactorily ſeen to be, in all caſes, productive of happineſs in the iſſue, under the government of an infinitely good God; and

the conviction muſt be repeated and *felt* again and again, before the ideas will entirely, univerſally, and readily coaleſce; ſo that, by reaſon of the neceſſary avocation of mind, and the unſteady and imperfect views of things we can gain in this ſtate, little can be done towards it here, and it muſt be referred to the attainments of a better world.

The above-mentioned facts, however, ſhew, in the ſtrongeſt light, what is the natural progreſs and effect of aſſociation of ideas in the human mind. We ſee the courſe that things are evidently in, and it doth not appear, that any bounds can be ſet to it. We muſt, therefore, in favourable circumſtances (ſuch as we ſhall, no doubt, find ourſelves in, in a future world) approximate to this perfection of comprehenſion with the experience of every day; in this way, time only is requiſite, to make a mere man arrive at a pitch of excellence and happineſs, of which we are able, at preſent, to form but very imperfect conceptions. With theſe lights, though, as yet, we are able to apply them but very imperfectly, how may we ſtand amazed in the contemplation of our future ſelves!

By the help of theſe conſiderations, we may form ſome idea wherein conſiſts the ſuperiority of beings of higher orders, whoſe intellectual powers exceed ours. The aſſociation of their ideas may be more extenſive, and aſſociated ideas may unite and coaleſce

coaleſce more readily, and perfectly in their minds, than they do in ours; the conſequence of which will be, that ideas collected from a greater ſpace, both before and after the preſent moment, will be co-exiſtent in their minds; which will make the influence of ideas ſtill greater, and that of ſenſation (or what may be in them analogous to ſenſation in us) ſtill leſs than it is with us; ſo that their natures will be more purely intellectual than ours.

Hence, alſo, if we may preſume to indulge a conjecture on ſuch a ſubject, may we form a faint idea of the incomprehenſible greatneſs and perfection of the divine being. For ſince there is a real connection of all things, in the whole ſyſtem of nature, how diſtant ſoever the parts of it may be, in point of time or place; this connection may at once be ſo completely ſeen by him who planned, and who directs the whole, that it may be ſaid, there is nothing paſt or future in his ideas; but that to him, the whole compaſs of duration is, to every real purpoſe, without diſtinction, preſent. To him, therefore, *one day is as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day*; the two extremes, being ſo perfectly united, and ſo equally preſent, that the intervals, how different ſoever, vaniſh alike in both caſes.

We ſee, then, the courſe which the divine being has pointed out for the improvement of intelligent beings, whereby we may make approaches

to

to the excellence and happineſs of the divine nature. We are to be influenced leſs by ſenſation, and more by aſſociated ideas perpetually. The aſſociation of all connected ideas is to grow more perfect, and more extenſive continually, till things paſt, preſent, and to come ſhall, to greater and greater diſtances, become the ſubject of our contemplation, and the ſource of our happineſs. Proviſion is made for the continuance of this progreſs, in the ſtructure of our minds, and in all the influences to which we are expoſed. All the objects about which we are converſant, and all the events to which we are liable, are contrived to favour it.

Let us now conſider whether any thing ſimilar to this may be obſerved in the ſcheme of revelation; and ſince both the ordinary and extraordinary courſe of divine providence have the ſame object with reſpect to us, both being deſigned and calculated to raiſe, improve, and bleſs the human race; let us conſider whether they be conducted in a manner analogous to one another; ſo that we may trace the ſame hand in both, and hence derive a preſumptive argument in favour of revelation.

To me, I own, there ſeems to be, in this reſpect, a very great analogy between both theſe diſpenſations of God to mankind, and the argument that may thence be deduced in favour of revelation ſtrikes me very much. For in thoſe extraordinary diſpenſations of God to mankind, of which we

we are informed in the books of ſcripture, we ſee a moſt glorious apparatus for accompliſhing this great end, for enlarging the comprehenſion of the human mind, and raiſing us to the higheſt pitch of perfection and excellence.

To have the mind impreſſed with the idea of its being in a ſtate of moral government, and that our actions have great and diſtant conſequences, is of admirable uſe in this reſpect; and this, we find, was the ſituation of Adam preſently after he came from the hands of his maker. He was permitted the free uſe of all the trees in the garden of Eden except one, which he was forbidden to meddle with under ſevere penalties. In theſe circumſtances he was under a neceſſity of looking before him, and attending to the diſtant conſequences of what he was doing. He ſaw (as is generally underſtood) an immortal exiſtence before him in caſe of obedience, and of prudence and regularity in the gratification of his appetites; and death (of the meaning of which he was, no doubt, informed) in caſe of diſobedience and irregular indulgence.

If we conſider the importance of having enlarged views, and of the attention being engaged upon objects, beyond the preſent moment, we muſt ſee how vaſtly ſuperior this ſituation was, with reſpect to the improvement of his faculties, to a ſtate in which he ſhould have been left to the random indulgence of his appetites, without any intimation

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of the conſequence, except what he could learn by ſlow experience. The more we think upon this ſubject, the greater will this advantage appear to be. Mankind might, for ages, have been little more than brutes, without ſome proviſion and aſſiſtance of this kind.

If the object of this trial, viz. the abſtaining from the fruit of a tree, appear trifling, we ſhould conſider the infantile ſtate of the firſt man, and the only dangerous exceſſes that, in his ſituation, he could be guilty of; and we may ſee the greateſt propriety in this very circumſtance. Would it not have been much more abſurd to have forbidden him to ſteal, to commit adultery, or, indeed, to have enjoined him the obſervance of any of the ten commandments of the moral law. What is more natural, or common with ourſelves, than to forbid children to eat of certain kinds of food, or to meddle with things that are moſt in their way, by which they are liable to do harm to themſelves or others. They are not capable of offending in any other reſpects, or of underſtanding any higher precepts. We are not made acquainted with all the reſtrictions under which our firſt parents were laid; but it cannot be doubted, but that they muſt have been of a ſalutary nature, whether they themſelves might be aware of it or not. We do not always give our children the reaſon of the reſtrictions we lay them under, becauſe they are not always capable

underſtanding them. The prohibition to
a particular fruit is the only one that is men-
by Moſes, becauſe that was the caſe in which
tranſgreſſed; but, for any thing we know,
ght have been as expreſsly forbidden to jump
a precipice, or to plunge into a pit of water;
ıe forbidden fruit might have been as natu-
hurtful to him as either of them.
is by no means improbable, but that ſome-
of *fable* may have mixed with ſo antient a
y as that of the *Fall*; and the preſent condi-
ıf man was, no doubt, both *foreſeen* and *in-*
by our all-wiſe creator, as the beſt for us
the whole; but I think we cannot reaſon-
ɔbject to the leading circumſtances in Moſes's
ınt of the manner in which we came into it.
as it repreſents man as entering upon exiſt-
under a ſenſe of *moral government*, it is far
agreeable to the ideas we conceive of the
m and goodneſs of God, more favourable to
uman race, and more conſonant to the natu-
oviſion he has made for enlarging the com-
nſion of the human mind, and thereby per-
g our natures, and advancing our happineſs;
ıerefore far ſuperior to the condition in which
:tius, and the reſt of the Epicureans, repre-
he introduction of man into the world, i. e.
no greater advantage for looking before him,

enlarg-

enlarging his views, and increaſing his happineſs, than the loweſt of the animal creation.

In the ſentence paſſed upon man after the fall, we ſee an opportunity is taken of carrying the views of the human mind to objects ſtill more remote; and encouraging, though obſcure views are opened to him, in the promiſe, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head.*

In the patriarchal ages, the intercourſe between the divine being and the human race is continued; but without his aſſuming a higher character than men in thoſe times were capable of having intercourſe with. Conſequently, their apprehenſions of moral government would be growing more clear and determinate, and their ideas of duty and obligation (together with their expectation of conſequences correſponding to their actions) more definite and certain; ſo as to induce them to be leſs influenced by proſpects of immediate pleaſure or gain than before.

The fate of men's children and poſterity is always an intereſting object to them, and muſt have been peculiarly ſo in the early ages of the world, when the whole earth was before them, and every man had the chance of being the founder of great and mighty nations. Theſe, therefore, were the views with which the divine being thought proper, at that time, to engage the attention of the patriarchs, and enforce the obligation of virtue.

Abra-

Abraham had the promiſe of becoming the *father of many nations*, and that *in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed.* With theſe proſpects, we find his mind ſo much enlarged, and his faith in futurity ſo ſtrong, that he leaves his native land; content and happy in being a ſojourner in the country which his poſterity were to poſſeſs.

In the whole courſe of the Jewiſh hiſtory, repeated miracles and prophecies would conſtantly tend to keep up the views of that people to great and remote objects. And this, together with the *diſtinct ideas* they had of the origin of the world, and the early hiſtory of it, their knowledge of the riſe of their own nation, and of the frequent interpoſitions of the divine being in their favour, would give a dignity to their conceptions, and a grandeur to their proſpects, to which the heathen nations muſt have been ſtrangers. There was a majeſty and dignity in the Jewiſh ritual, in their temple, and the ſervice of it, which far exceeded any thing in the heathen world; and being accompanied with juſt and ſublime ideas of the one true God, it muſt have given a ſublimity to their ſentiments, and a warmth and fervour to their religious impreſſions, to which other nations could not have attained. Accordingly, in all the compoſitions of the heathen poets, in honour of their gods, there are no traces of any thing like that

ſpirit

ſpirit of manly devotion, which animates the pſalms of David.

In the frequent relapſes of the Jews into idolatry, the prophets are continually ſent of God, to remind them of the allegiance they owed to their maker, to hold out to them the expectation of his favour or reſentment, and thereby preſerve upon their minds the influence of great and remote objects.

When they were effectually cured of their proneneſs to idolatry, by the Babyloniſh captivity; and, therefore, ſuch frequent interpoſitions of the divine being were leſs neceſſary, their minds were prepared for that long interruption of miracles which enſued, by the remarkably diſtinct prophecies of Iſaiah, Daniel, and Malachi, concerning future and glorious times under the Meſſiah. The very year of his appearance was fixed by Daniel, and though it was not done in ſuch a manner as to enable them to make it out with perfect exactneſs, yet it was ſufficient to keep up their attention to it; and, in fact, they were not ſo far out in their calculations, but that, at the time of our Saviour, and not long before, we find a general and moſt ardent expectation raiſed in the whole body of the Jewiſh nation of ſome approaching deliverer.

In this interval, therefore, between the captivity and the birth of Chriſt, far greater views and proſpects were preſent to the mind of a Jew, than people

people of other nations could have any idea of. So great was the actual influence of theſe ideas, that, in the time of the Maccabees, they ſhewed a heroiſm and magnanimity in the defence of their religion, and in ſuffering for it, which muſt have aſtoniſhed their heathen perſecutors. And our Saviour found among them ſuch notions of a future ſtate, and of a reſurrection, as (however they came by them, and how imperfect and obſcure ſoever they were) could not fail to make numbers of them to think and act in a manner far ſuperior to the moſt admired of the Greek and Roman philoſophers.

If the attention of the Jews was kept awake to great and diſtant objects, how much more is this the caſe with chriſtians, to whom life and immortality are brought to light by the goſpel. Chriſtianity is the laſt diſpenſation of God to mankind, and it doth not ſeem poſſible, that more ample proviſion ſhould be made to enlarge the views and comprehenſion of the human mind, in order to fix its attention upon great and remote objects, and raiſe it above the influence of preſent and temporary things.

A true chriſtian, like his great maſter, is *not of this world*, but a citizen of heaven. He conſiders himſelf as a *ſtranger and pilgrim here below, and lives by faith, and not by ſight.* Let him be ever ſo poor and deſpiſed here, he looks upon himſelf as an heir

heir of immortal glory and felicity, of an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for him.* He may ſee his body decaying with old age, waſting with a diſorder, or mangled with torture, and every way at the mercy of his enraged perſecutors; but he rejoices in the firm belief and expectation of its riſing again *incorruptible* at the laſt day; and that when *Chriſt, who is the reſurrection and the life, ſhall appear, he alſo ſhall appear with him in glory.*

What an elevation of thought and ſentiment is here! How muſt this faith make us *overcome the world*, and render us ſuperior to its allurements or its threats. With this enlarged comprehenſion of mind, which brings the future conſequences of his actions into immediate proſpect, it is impoſſible that a ſincere chriſtian ſhould live addicted to vicious gratifications and purſuits, which he muſt ſee to be deſtructive of theſe his animating hopes; and he muſt neceſſarily grow more in love with that temper and conduct which is, with the greateſt propriety, called *chriſtian*, and which enſures to him theſe glorious expectations. *As he who has called him* to theſe great privileges *is holy, ſo will he alſo be holy in all manner of converſation.* It will be his daily endeavour to *cultivate that holineſs of heart and life, without which*, he is ſenſible, *no man can ſee the Lord. With this hope ſet before him*, all the afflictions of this preſent life will ſeem light, trifling,

ſling, and not worthy to be named with, but ill be abſolutely loſt in the conſideration of, that *rnal weight of glory* which awaits his patient con- nuance in well doing.

This ſuperiority to preſent and temporary things, hich is attained by truly chriſtian principles, is the moſt rational nature, being of the ſame kind th that which is acquired by experience, and hich neceſſarily reſults from the ſtructure of our inds, and the circumſtances in which divine pro- dence has placed us in this world: for it is only rfecting the aſſociation of thoſe ideas which have real connection, and uniting in our minds the ſe- ral parts of one whole, and things which nothing ut time ſeparates. If it be compared with that ind of ſuperiority which might be acquired by ther principles, thoſe of the *Stoics*, for inſtance, s advantage will appear to be exceedingly great.

The Stoic affects to deſpiſe pain, becauſe, ac- ording to his arbitrary definition of things, it annot be called an *evil*, and does not depend upon imſelf. Having imagined, though without any round, that every man's happineſs muſt, in any aſe, ariſe from himſelf (in excluſion even of the ivine being) he thinks it abſurd to complain of ny thing which he could not help. Complaint mplies a ſenſe of unhappineſs; and this, accord- ng to his hypotheſis, can never take place without

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his own conſent. If his wife or child be in the moſt dreadful agonies, he looks, or affects to look on their condition with the greateſt tranquillity, and the moſt unfeeling indifference; ſatisfied that ſickneſs and pain are not in his catalogue of *things within his power*, and that the ſufferers themſelves are not unhappy, ſince misfortunes are unavoidable, and he knew that his wife or child were not naturally exempt from them. When he dies, he expects that his ſoul, being a particle detached from the Univerſal Mind, will be abſorbed in it again, and that his ſeparate conſciouſneſs will be loſt for ever.

Theſe are the great outlines of the famous philoſophical ſyſtem of Zeno, which is ſaid to have made ſo many great men; but it has certainly no foundation in nature. The principles of it can never have been really felt, and all the boaſted effects of it muſt have ariſen from conceit and obſtinacy.

How differently, and how much more naturally, does the chriſtian think and act in the caſes abovementioned! He does not pretend to deny the evidence of his ſenſes, nor has recourſe to whimſical diſtinctions; and not having maintained that *pain is no evil*, he finds himſelf under no neceſſity of behaving as if he was unaffected by it. He owns that preſent ſufferings are *not joyous, but grievous*; but he ſtill thinks them nothing in compariſon with *the*

glory

ry *that ſhall be revealed*, and therefore he *endures tiently* for righteouſneſs ſake, in a firm belief of ing more than recompenſed for them *at the reſur-ction of the juſt*. If his friends be in diſtreſs, he is no principles that lead him to check, but, on e other hand, ſuch as encourage him freely to in-lge his natural ſympathy with them; and theſe elings will certainly prompt him to exert himſelf the utmoſt in their favour. At the ſame time, will not fail to exhort his friends to the duties of riſtian patience and fortitude; inculcating the eat chriſtian doctrine of the tranſitorineſs of this orld, and its ſubſerviency to another. When he es, he indulges no extravagant, but really uncom-rtable conceit, about being abſorbed in the divine ind; but believes that he ſhall, in his own perſon, e again from the dead, when he ſhall reſume, and ain his own ſeparate conſciouſneſs, live again der the government of that God whoſe good-ſs he has experienced, and whoſe friendſhip he s ſecured, know all his virtuous friends once ore, and rejoice with them through all eternity.

If we conſider the *principles of morals* in the hea-en world, we ſhall ſee the manifeſt advantage ere is over it in the plan of revelation. The ews of the heathens upon this ſubject were exceed-gly confined, and did not require that compre-nſion of mind, which is neceſſary to the practice thoſe duties that were enjoined both in the Jewiſh

and chriſtian ſyſtems. The great duties of piety, conſiſting in the fear and love of God, and a chearful reliance on his providence, were, in a manner, unknown in antient times beyond the boundaries of Judea. And what can more evidently tend to enlarge the comprehenſion and faculties of the human mind, than the regards which are due to the maker and governor of the world?

While the attention of the heathens was wholly engroſſed by ſenſible things, thoſe who were favoured with divine revelation, even in its moſt imperfect ſtate, were engaged in the contemplation of their inviſible author. They conſidered the enjoyments of life as the effects of his bounty, and all the events of it as taking place according to the wiſe appointment of his providence. Thus was the power of aſſociation enabled to preſent to their minds the ideas of great and remote objects, by which their ſentiments were influenced, and their conduct directed. By this means, limited as were the views of the ancient patriarchs, their conceptions were far more enlarged and conſequently their minds more intellectual, than thoſe of the Gentile world.

It is true that all the heathens were prone to ſuperſtition, and that a great number of their actions were influenced by regards to inviſible agents; but (not to ſay, what is very probable, that their religion was, in this reſpect, a corruption of the patriarchal) all the Gods, they had

had any idea of, at leaſt all with whom they maintained any intercourſe, were *local* and *territorial* divinities, liable to the influence of low and vulgar paſſions, and limited in their powers and operations. It was not poſſible, therefore, that their theology ſhould ſuggeſt ſuch ſublime ideas, as muſt have been conceived by the Jews, from the peruſal of the books of Moſes; in which we find the idea of one God, the creator and lord of heaven and earth, who eſtabliſhed, and who controuls the laws of nature, and who ſuperintends the affairs of the whole world, giving the kingdoms of it to whomſoever he pleaſes; a being of unſpotted purity, and a friend and protector of all good men. So far were the notions which the Gentiles entertained of their Gods below the conceptions of the Jews, concerning the Jehovah, the lord of of heaven and earth, *who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage*, deſtroying their enemies in the Red Sea, and feeding them with bread from heaven for the ſpace of forty years; that they could hardly have had any ideas to ſome of the fineſt expreſſions which occur in the ſacred books of the Jews; as, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, and many others, which expreſs ſentiments of the moſt pure and exalted devotion.

If any people have exalted and ſublime ideas, they are ſure to be found in their poetry; but how

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poor and low is the ſacred poetry of the heathens in compariſon with the Pſalms of David! The poems of Homer, of Heſiod, or of Callimachus, in honour of the Grecian gods, can hardly be read without laughter; but the book of Pſalms (the greateſt part of which were written long before the works of any of thoſe Grecian poets, and by perſons who had travelled and ſeen far leſs than they had done) cannot be read without the greateſt ſerioufneſs, and are ſtill capable of exciting ſentiments of the warmeſt and moſt exalted, and yet the moſt perfectly rational devotion. They give us the moſt ſublime ideas of the infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of God. This difference between the poetry of the Jews and the Greeks, in favour of the former, is ſo great, that I think it cannot be accounted for without the ſuppoſition of divine communications. In point of genius, the Greeks ſeem to have been evidently ſuperior, and they were evidently ſuperior, and they were certainly poſſeſſed of the art of compoſition in much greater perfection.

Whence, then could ariſe ſo manifeſt an inferiority in this reſpect? It muſt have been becauſe the Jewiſh theology gave that nation ideas of a being infinitely ſuperior to themſelves, the contemplation of which, with that of his works, and of his providence, would tend to improve and exalt their faculties; whereas the heathen theology gave them no ideas of beings much ſuperior to the

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race of man. In general the gods of the Greeks and Romans were ſuppoſed to have been mere men, beings of the ſame rank and condition with themſelves; and though their powers were ſuppoſed to be enlarged upon their deification, their paſſions and morals were not at all improved, but continued juſt the ſame as before; ſo that their greater powers were employed about the gratification of the loweſt appetites. This theology, therefore, could not infuſe that noble enthuſiaſm which was inſpired by the Jewiſh religion, but muſt rather have tended to debaſe their faculties.

That extenſive and perfect *benevolence*, which is ſo ſtrongly inculcated in the New Teſtament, implies more enlarged ſentiments, and greater perfection of the intellectual faculties, than that more limited benevolence, which is treated of by the heathen moraliſts, which was hardly ever thought to extend farther than to a love of one's own countrymen, and which admitted ſlaves to none of the privileges of men, but conſidered them as no other than the property of their maſters. But, in the eye of a Chriſtian, *Jew and Gentile*, *Barbarian*, *Scythian*, *bond and free*, are all equal. The boaſted attachments of private friendſhip are not more endearing than that mutual love which Chriſt recommends to his diſciples. But, whereas private friendſhip was, with the Greeks and Romans, the perfection, and almoſt the end of all virtue, the *brotherly love* of

chriſtians is only conſidered as a branch of a more extenſive benevolence, and leads to the love of all the human race.

It is evident, that the duties of contentment, truſt in divine providence, meekneſs, patience, forbearance, and forgiveneſs of injuries, are more inſiſted on by Chriſt and his apoſtles, than by any of the heathen philoſophers; and theſe virtues certainly require a greater comprehenſion of mind than any other ſocial duties. Children are quick in their reſentments, their anger is preſently excited, and they are unable to conceal what little malice or revenge they are capable of; but, in proportion as men advance in age, in experience, and, conſequently, in intellect, they are able to overlook affronts, and to ſuſpend, or wholly to ſtifle their reſentments; becauſe they are able to take in more diſtant conſequences of paſſions and actions; and the ſentiments which are ſuggeſted by theſe extenſive views, moderate and overpower thoſe which are prompted by their preſent ſenſations.

Chriſtianity, therefore, by extending theſe duties, ſuppoſes, and thereby favours and promotes a ſtill greater advance in intellectual perfection. To act like a chriſtian, a man muſt be poſſeſſed of true greatneſs of mind, a ſelf-command, fortitude, or magnanimity, which is infinitely more ſuperior to the diſguiſed revenge of which ſome are capable, and which they can brood over for years, than this

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is ſuperior to the quick reſentments of children. It requires a more juſt knowledge of things, more experience, and more foreſight.

Thus does the chriſtian ſcheme appear to be perfectly conſonant to nature. It ſuppoſes a ſeries of diſpenſations, in which the human mind is operated upon, and its improvement promoted in a manner analogous to that in which it is actually operated upon, and its improvement promoted every day. As the one, therefore, is conducted according to the ordinary providence of the divine being, the other is what might be expected from his extraordinary diſpenſations. Both theſe ſchemes have the ſame great object in view, and in both of them the ſame end is gained by the ſame methods. For, in fact, the only inſtrument employed is that great and extenſive principle of *aſſociation of ideas*, which is ſo conſpicuous in the human mind, and which, according to the admirable theory of Dr. Hartley, furniſhes the *ſtamina* for all its other properties, and is the ſource of all our faculties.

It is by this principle of *aſſociation*, that our views are enlarged to take in diſtant objects, but objects that have a real connection with thoſe that are preſent. And it is an habitual attention to theſe aſſociated circumſtances of our actions, that gives them an influence as if they were preſent. As virtue, with all its conſequences in this life, is eligible upon the whole, we are led, by this principle of aſſo-

ciation, to chuſe and practice it, without any other guide than nature and common providence; but as virtue, with all thoſe more extenſive conſequences, which revelation informs us of, is infinitely more eligible; we are led, by the ſame principle of aſſociation, to love it with more ardour, and to practice it with more conſtancy; becauſe, by the help of thoſe lights, which are furniſhed by the extraordinary providence of Almighty God, in the revelation of his will to mankind, we ſee it to be a thing in which we are more deeply intereſted than we could otherwiſe have known ourſelves to be.

INSTITUTES

INSTITUTES

OF

NATURAL AND REVEALED

RELIGION.

PART III.

CONTAINING

A View of the Doctrines of Revelation.

THE

INTRODUCTION.

THE execution of this part of my undertaking has been attended (as all who are acquainted with the ſubject will be fully ſenſible) with peculiar difficulties, owing chiefly to the very different views, which even rational and learned men have entertained concerning the *Doctrines of Revelation*; and, therefore, it is with peculiar diffidence that I offer this part to the public.

A ſtrict attention, however, to my original deſign, which was *the inſtruction of young perſons*, has enabled me to keep clear of a great deal of that embarraſſment, in which I ſhould otherwiſe have been involved; for, though it was not poſſible to avoid all ſubjects that have been controverted, I have, by this means, avoided many of them; and there are few of thoſe which I could not avoid that I have diſcuſſed at large, having contented myſelf, for the moſt part, with relating what appeared to me to be the genuine Doctrines of Revelation,

without intimating that there has ever been any controverſy upon the ſubject.

It was alſo with a view to the inſtruction of youth, that I have been ſo particular in my account of what we learn from the ſcriptures concerning *God*; and all the branches of human *duty*; and, eſpecially, that I have quoted ſo much from the ſcriptures themſelves on thoſe ſubjects. My intention was to appear as little as poſſible in this matter myſelf, and to let the ſacred writers, to whoſe more intimate acquaintance I wiſh to introduce my pupil, ſpeak for themſelves. There is, beſides, an authority and energy in the language of the ſcriptures, which is peculiar to themſelves, and which cannot fail, when they are read and conſidered with due attention, to make the moſt favourable and the ſtrongeſt impreſſions.

I have, upon more occaſions than one, complained that the ſcriptures are too much neglected even by chriſtians, though we cannot be too well acquainted with them, and there are no books that we can read with ſo much advantage. I ſhall be happy if I can make this work alſo ſubſervient to my deſign of recommending them, and more eſpecially to young perſons. This part, which contains an account of what we learn from the ſcriptures, was far from being intended to ſuperſede the uſe of them. It was rather intended to afford ſome aſſiſtance for the better underſtanding of them, and thereby

thereby to introduce my reader to the diligent ſtudy of them, and frequent meditation upon them, with more advantage.

I had intended to have prefixed to this part a particular examination of what has been advanced concerning the doctrines and evidences of religion by Dr. Beattie, and eſpecially Dr. Oſwald, who repreſent *common ſenſe* as ſuperſeding almoſt all *reaſoning* about religion, natural or revealed, and who have advanced maxims which I cannot help thinking to be both ill-founded and dangerous. But finding, after I had made ſome progreſs in this work, that it drew to a conſiderable length, I thought it would be better to reſerve the remarks that I had made on thoſe writers to ſome other opportunity, when I might enter into a more particular examination of what Dr. Reid has advanced concerning this pretended new principle of *common ſenſe*; and, in the mean time, to content myſelf with a few general remarks on the ſubject, and an extract or two from Dr. Oſwald, that my reader may form ſome idea of the nature and ſpirit of the principles that I mean to oppoſe*.

I am truly ſorry to complain of the conduct of any of the ſincere friends of revelation, as I be-

* Since this was written I have publiſhed, in a ſeparate volume, *An Examination of the writings of Dr. Reid, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oſwald.*

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lieve Dr. Beattie and Dr. Oſwald to be; but it appears to me, that their writings muſt neceſſarily give a great, and a very plauſible advantage to unbelievers; who, finding that it is not now pretended that religion in general, or chriſtianity in particular, is founded on *argument*, will make no difficulty of rejecting them on the principles of *common ſenſe* alſo, and will not be diſpleaſed to find that chriſtian writers will argue the matter with them no longer.

This common ſenſe, which is from henceforth to be conſidered as the firſt, and likewiſe the laſt reſort with reſpect to religion, and the evidences of it, theſe writers repreſent as being the ſame power or faculty by which we judge that the whole is greater than a part, and by which we diſtinguiſh all other ſelf-evident truths from palpable abſurdities. By the very conciſe proceſs of an appeal to this principle, they ſay, that any man may fully ſatisfy himſelf concerning the truth of the being, the unity, the attributes, and the providence of God, and alſo of a future ſtate of retribution, and even (as Dr. Oſwald has given out, and has promiſed to prove at large) of the evidences of chriſtianity.

Upon this plan I might have ſaved myſelf the trouble of writing the preceding parts of this work, in which my object has been to prove the truth of the above-mentioned propoſitions, contenting myſelf

ſelf with roundly aſſerting them; and, without replying to any of the objections of unbelievers, not heſitating to pronounce every man a fool (ſee Dr. Oſwald's Appeal, p. 134.) who did not aſſent to them.

But, notwithſtanding, I have given all the attention I could to the treatiſe of Dr. Oſwald, who has written moſt fully on the ſubject, I am by no means convinced that the propoſitions above-mentioned are to be claſſed among *primary truths*, or thoſe to which every man muſt neceſſarily give his aſſent (when the terms of them have been properly explained) without the help of other intermediate propoſitions. And as I have no natural right to ſet up my private judgment as the ſtandard of truth, in oppoſition to that of the reſt of mankind, I do not ſee but that an unbeliever is as much at liberty to aſſert the *falſhood*, as I am to aſſert the *truth* of ſuch propoſitions; and what would be gained by our reciprocally calling one another fools and blockheads?

The ſource of this umbrage that has been taken at *reaſoning* about religion, appears to me to have been a miſtake concerning the nature of it, and an expectation of a *kind*, or *degree* of evidence, that the nature of the caſe will not admit of; and which, indeed, is by no means neceſſary for the purpoſe to which it is applied; being different from, or ſuperior to, that evidence which, in other

other ſimilar caſes, does actually produce conviction, and influence the conduct; which, however, is evidently all that can be neceſſary in the buſineſs of religion.

If a lottery be propoſed to me, in which I ſee that there are a thouſand prizes to one blank, I do not demur about purchaſing a ticket, becauſe it cannot be *abſolutely demonſtrated* that I ſhall be a gainer by it; a very high degree of probability having an effect upon the mind, that can hardly be diſtinguiſhed from that of abſolute certainty.

If the Copernican hypotheſis of the ſolar ſyſtem be propoſed to me, I do not reject it, or even keep my mind in ſuſpenſe, becauſe there is a *poſſibility* of the Ptolemaic ſyſtem being true, and becauſe the ſun, immenſe as it is, and rapid as its motion muſt be, *may* revolve round the earth.

This is ſtill more evidently the caſe with reſpect to the influence of *teſtimony* upon the mind of man, though it can never amount to more than a very high degree of probability. For we reaſon and act upon the ſuppoſition of there having been ſuch a man as Julius Cæſar, of his having been ſtabbed in the ſenate-houſe, and of there being ſuch a city as Pekin in China, juſt as if we ourſelves had been preſent at thoſe ſcenes, or places; though there is a *poſſibility* of all the books we have read having been contrived to impoſe upon us and the world,

world, and that all our acquaintance were in the ſecret, and concurred to favour the deception.

Now all the evidence of religious truths is of theſe kinds, being either general concluſions, by induction from a number of particular appearances, or founded on hiſtorical evidence.

If any perſon, like Lord Bolingbroke, call in queſtion the goodneſs of God, all that I can ſay to convince him of his miſtake, is to ſhew him that there are more marks of kind intention than of the contrary in the ſtructure and government of the world; and, if he reply, that ſome facts, ſingly taken, are as evident marks of a malevolent intention, as others are of a good intention, and the particular inſtances to which he alludes be ſuch as I cannot deny or explain, ſo that my proof is not complete, I frankly acknowledge that I have no other, or better. But this is ſufficient to ſatisfy me, and, I preſume, it will be abundantly ſatisfactory to all who are candid and impartial; and with perſons who are otherwiſe diſpoſed, an appeal to their common ſenſe will have no more effect.

In like manner, to prove the facts of the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, the early dates, and conſequent authenticity of the goſpel hiſtories, or any other facts, from which the truth of what we call the *goſpel* is inferred, it is ſufficient, but it is neceſſary, to ſhew that the credibility of theſe facts

has

has the ſame foundation as that of thoſe which conſtitute the body of all ancient hiſtory, and that the miraculous events have ſuch additional evidence of an external and internal kind, as overbalances our backwardneſs to admit the truth of facts diſſimilar to thoſe in other hiſtories, and thoſe which have fallen within our own particular obſervation. And if any perſon will ſay that this is not *demonſtration*, I am ſilent; ſatisfied with having alledged ſuch evidence as the nature of the caſe admitted, and deſpairing of producing conviction by any other means.

The thing that ſeems chiefly to have influenced the writers above-mentioned to deſert the plain doctrine of Mr. Locke, concerning the ſource of our ideas, is its inſufficiency to demonſtrate the reality of a *material world*; and, I readily acknowledge, it is inſufficient for ſuch a demonſtration as ſhall leave no room for cavil: becauſe it may be ſaid that, it is *poſſible* that the divine being may, by his own immediate agency, preſent every ſeparate train of ideas to every individual mind, without the medium of an external world. And if this appears to any perſon a more natural, and ſimple hypotheſis to account for our ideas, and therefore preferable to the ſuppoſition of a real external world; by means of which, and of a more general agency of the deity, the ſame ideas may be preſented to thouſands and millions of minds, I leave

leave him to his imagination, from which no evil, that I know, will result.

Half the inhabitants of the globe, for instance, may be looking towards the heavens at the same time, and all their minds are impressed in the same manner: all see the moon, stars, and planets, in precisely the same situations; and even the observations of those who use telescopes, correspond with the utmost exactness. To explain this, bishop Berkley says, that the divine being, attending particularly to each individual mind, impresses their sensoriums in the same, or a corresponding manner, without the medium of any thing external to them. On the other hand, I, without pretending that his scheme is impossible, where divine power is concerned, think, however, that it is more natural to suppose, that there really are such bodies as the moon, stars, and planets, placed at certain distances from us, and moving in certain directions; by means of which, without such an agency of the deity as he supposes, all our minds are necessarily impressed in this corresponding manner.

I am satisfied that if such a representation as this (by which I exhibit to any person particular appearances as arising from more *general laws*, which is agreeable to the analogy of every thing else that we observe) does not please and convince him, it will signify nothing to tell him, with Messrs.

Meſſrs. Reid, Beattie, and Oſwald, that the caſe is not to be argued at all, that he has ſomething within himſelf, called *common ſenſe*, which tells him that there *is* an external world, and that, if he reflects a moment, he muſt *know* that all his objections are frivolous and abſurd.

The hypotheſis of there being no external world, is by no means ſo ſhocking to my underſtanding, or, to uſe the favourite phraſe, my common ſenſe, as the ſuppoſition that I am properly *conſcious* of more than paſſes within my own mind, or, as Dr. Reid expreſſes it, that we *really perceive things that are external to us*, and do not judge of all things that are without ourſelves by notices perceived within, how miſtaken ſoever we may be in our judgments concerning them.

It is not very eaſy to underſtand what it is, philoſophically ſpeaking, that Dr. Reid, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oſwald, always mean by their common ſenſe; but how captivating ſoever their general deſcription of it may be at the firſt hearing, they appear to me to be exceedingly vague and inconſiſtent, upon a more attentive examination.

Sometimes one would imagine, that the human mind was ſo effectually guarded with this internal defence, that no one of the human race could be in danger of falling into any error of conſequence, and that even all revelation might have been

been ſpared. "The human mind," ſays Dr. Oſwald, vol. i. p. 8, "has a power of pronouncing, at firſt ſight on obvious truth, with a "quickneſs, clearneſs, and indubitable certainty, "ſimilar, if not equal to the information conveyed by the external organs of ſenſe. Its exerciſe begins in children with the firſt dawn "of rationality, and not till then; and is ever "after enjoyed, in ſome degree, by learned and "unlearned, and by every individual of the human kind, who is not an ideot, or ſome how "diſordered in his intellectuals, affording an "almoſt infallible direction in the whole conduct of their lives; and was intended by the "author of our being for giving us intire ſatisfaction concerning all primary truths, thoſe of "religion in particular; and our not having recourſe to that power, is the true cauſe of thoſe "idle diſputes which have been maintained of late "about the truth of religion. The feeling of "moral excellence," he ſays, p. 120, "may be "loſt, but, the caſe of madneſs excepted, a man "cannot loſe a perception of the difference between "obvious truth and palpable abſurdity."

At other times we are informed, that it is a moſt difficult thing to attain to a right judgment on the principles of this ſame common ſenſe. "Good ſenſe," Dr. Oſwald ſays, vol. i. p. 16, "is a ſpecies of knowledge, of difficult attainment.

" ment. It is, indeed, the gift of heaver
" needs to be ſtirred up, and has been ſo long
" univerſally neglected, that to give it full
" ciſe requires more attention and applicati
" thought, than moſt people are willing to be
" Every ſmatterer in ſcience takes it for gr
" that he is poſſeſſed of the principles of good
" but on trial the greateſt adepts will hardly
" them. They are, in truth, ſo plain, that
" luſtrate and inculcate them is to tire the pati
" and to affront the judgment of the reader;
" at the ſame time, ſo diametrically oppoſi
" received opinions, and eſtabliſhed maxims,
" barely to propoſe, or even to ſtate them
" perſpicuity, without unfolding or inculc
" them with due care, would be to encou
" that ſuperficial way of judging, which is
" ſource of all our errors."

He farther ſays, p. 18, that in order " to
" vey that full and permanent conviction w
" is due to truths of the firſt rank, the mind
" be allowed to judge of them with imparti
" and coolneſs, proceeding not upon ſentim
" ſuddenly raiſed by ſtriking views of truth,
" on a deliberate judgment, formed by a fam
" acquaintance with the object: and in c
" thereto, the ſame truths muſt be preſented a
" and again, with no great variation, and
" as little adventitious ornament as poſſible."

In this deplorable ſtate of the affairs of *common ſenſe*, one would think that Dr. Oſwald might be glad to avail himſelf of the aid of *reaſon*; but of this he entertains the greateſt dread. Even a profeſſed unbeliever is not ſo great a bugbear to him as a reaſoning chriſtian. I ſhall preſent my reader with one of his numerous pathetical complaints on this ſubject.

"Not only the chriſtian revelation, but the "moral perfections and moral government of God, "yea, and the very being of virtue, have been "made a ſubject of diſpute. Freethinkers are not "aſhamed to publiſh their doubts concerning "theſe realities; divines and philoſophers have "not diſdained to eſtabliſh them by a multitude "of arguments. What is yet more to be regret-"ted, the preachers of the goſpel, forgetting the "dignity of their character, and the deſign of their "office, have condeſcended to plead the cauſe of "religion in much the ſame manner as lawyers "maintain a diſputed right of property. Inſtead "of awakening the natural ſentiments of the hu-"man heart, and giving them a free direction, "they have entered into reaſonings about piety, "juſtice, and benevolence, too profound to be "fathomed by the multitude, and too ſubtile to "produce any conſiderable effect. Inſtead of ſet-"ting forth the diſplays of divine perfection in "the

"the diſpenſation of the goſpel, ſo admirably "well fitted to touch, to penetrate, and to ſubdue "the human mind, they have entertained their "audiences with long and laboured proofs of a "revelation from God, of which few have any ſe- "rious doubt, and which no man can diſbelieve "in any conſiſtency with common ſenſe. May "not this be called with great propriety a throw- "ing cold water on religion? And ought it not "to be conſidered as one of the chief cauſes of "that inſenſibility to all its concerns, of which "we ſo frequently complain? The multitude "have been aſtoniſhed, wiſe men have been "aſhamed, and good men grieved at this treat- "ment of religion, ſo much beneath its dignity."

I would not be ſevere upon Dr. Oſwald, though he obſerves no bounds in his cenſures of the moſt reſpectable writers of the laſt and preſent age, without diſtinction; but I cannot help ſaying, that, in his looſe and rhetorical manner, and with ſuch airs of ſelf-ſufficiency, and arrogance, is the greateſt part of his two volumes written; conſiſting of mere declamation, the groſſeſt miſrepreſentations of the nature of reaſoning, and exaggerations of the abuſes of it; imputing to chriſtian divines a conduct that they are not chargeable with, and where argument fails, having recourſe to dogmatical aſſertions, and abuſe; at the ſame time

time that his tautology is inexpreſſibly tireſome. I really do not remember that I ever read a work ſo large as this of Dr. Oſwald, that contained ſo little; I do not mean of *truth*, but of *any thing*. That any good ſhould come of this manner of writing is to me incomprehenſible. It may, indeed give pleaſure to ſome to ſee inſolence anſwered by inſolence, and ſophiſtry by ſophiſtry; but, alas! truth is no gainer by ſuch a mode of defence as this.

It was not till after the publication of the two preceding parts of this work that I had an opportunity of reading Dr. Oſwald's treatiſe; for though I had promiſed the author of the *Remarks on my publications*, to procure it immediately, upon his recommendation, a variety of purſuits prevented my giving any attention to it. I am ſorry that my opinion of this performance ſhould differ ſo much from that of this ingenious writer, and indeed from that of many other perſons whom I much reſpect.

As to *Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Senſe*, I frankly declare, that, excepting a few incidental things, foreign to his general object, I do not find in it a ſingle obſervation that is *new*, and at the ſame time *juſt*. The only effect of all the pains that both this ingenious writer, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oſwald have

PART III.

THE

DOCTRINES

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

AS the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions have been proved to be founded on a ſeries of revelations of the will of God to man, the hiſtory of which is recorded in the Old and New Teſtament, it behoves us to examine theſe books with care; taking it for granted, that they contain truths of the greateſt importance to our happineſs.

In this part of my work, therefore, I propoſe to exhibit, with as much fidelity and diſtinctneſs as I can, all the *general knowledge* that can, with certainty, be collected from theſe books, which are uſually, and very deſervedly, termed *ſacred*. I ſhall be careful, however, to keep as far as poſſible from all controverſy, and ſimply recite what appears to me to be contained in the ſcriptures, juſt as I think I ſhould have done if I had never heard

heard of any controverſy upon the ſubject. Every thing that has been the ſubject of much contention and debate, I ſhall reſerve for another work, which will be appropriated to a view of the corruptions of chriſtianity.

As I divided the ſubject of natural religion into three parts, the firſt containing what we are able to learn from thence concerning *God*, the ſecond concerning *our duty*, and the third concerning our *future expectations*, I ſhall adhere to the ſame general diviſion in this part of my work alſo; by which means it will be more eaſily and diſtinctly ſeen what *additional*, what *fuller*, and *clearer* knowledge, we receive on theſe important ſubjects from divine revelation.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING GOD.

This firſt chapter I ſhall ſubdivide into two others, the firſt reſpecting the *unity*, as alſo the *natural perfections*, and *providence* of God, and the ſecond his *moral perfections*.

SECTION I.

Of the *unity*, the *natural perfections*, and *providence of God*.

ONE of the moſt important of all the truths concerning God, as that inviſible being, who is the object of our ſupreme reverence, and to whom we addreſs ourſelves in prayer, as our immediate inſpector, and moral governor, is his *unity*. That there is but one God, we have ſeen to be a truth deducible from the obſervation of the works of nature; but it is not ſo eaſily and clearly deducible from thence, but that mankind have always been prone to fall into *idolatry*, or the worſhip of more gods than one; which ſeems to have ariſen chiefly from the very low and imperfect ideas that men entertained of the knowledge and power of God.

Judging

Judging of all other intelligent beings by themſelves, they had no conception of one ſuperintending mind only being ſufficient for all the purpoſes for which the preſence and agency of the deity was ſuppoſed to be requiſite; and therefore they imagined, that there muſt, of neceſſity, be a multiplicity of beings of that character, each ſuperintending his reſpective province in nature. If they retained the idea of one *ſupreme* God, which ſeems to have been the belief of all mankind in the earlieſt ages (handed down, I believe, by tradition from Noah and his immediate deſcendants) they ſtill did not think that this one ſupreme being could govern the world without the aſſiſtance of other *ſubordinate* beings, of an intermediate nature between himſelf and man. Theſe ſubordinate agents they would therefore conſider as the beings with whom they had immediately to do, and whom their religious worſhip and homage would reſpect; while the worſhip of the ſupreme being would be in danger of being neglected.

This was the actual progreſs of things in the heathen world. Mankind began with the worſhip of one true God; but, having afterwards aſſociated with him various inferior beings, as objects of divine worſhip, they, in time, loſt ſight of the ſupreme being altogether; ſo that none of the objects of the popular worſhip among the Greeks or Romans were any thing more than either the ſun,

moon, and ſtars, the ſouls of dead men, or the ſymbol images, ſymbols, &c.

With theſe general ideas, which are the foundation of all idolatry, mankind would naturally in the firſt place, pitch upon the moſt illuſtrious objects in the creation, as inſtruments in the hands of the ſupreme being of communicating bleſſings to them, or inflicting judgments upon them; and theſe they would conſider as the moſt proper to be placed in the order of gods. Accordingly we find, that the ſun, moon, and ſtars, were univerſally the firſt objects of idolatrous worſhip, as thoſe beings from which it was ſuppoſed that men had the moſt to hope or to fear. And being ſenſible that *intelligence* was neceſſary to their office of ſuperintending the affairs of men, they either imagined them to be animated by ſome intelligent minds, or to be the habitations of ſuch beings.

Imagining alſo that there muſt be ſomething in man beſides what is viſible, they conceived that ſpirit, capable of being ſeparated from him, animated him alſo; and, ſuppoſing that the power of this animating ſpirit might even be enlarged after death, they made the moſt illuſtrious of their princes and heroes the objects of divine worſhip likewiſe. Afterwards, imagining that various parts both of the animate and inanimate creation bore a peculiar relation to theſe gods, with reſpect to their names,

mes, forms, or qualities, they firſt entertained a pect for them as the ſymbols, or tokens of the eſence of their gods; and in time proceeded to nceive of them as being themſelves endowed ith ſupernatural powers. In this manner, obably, the ancient Egyptians came to rank great number of both animals and vegeta-es, and alſo their images, &c. among their vinities.

By proceeding in this train, it came to paſs, as have obſerved already, that at length the one ving and true God, the creator and governor of e world, was overlooked, and forgotten by man-ind. The neceſſary conſequence of this was, at, beſides entertaining very falſe, unworthy, nd injurious ideas of God and his perfections, ankind were deſtitute of that moſt excellent eans of exalting their conceptions, and conſe-uently of improving their natures, which is de-ived from the contemplation of, and a ſenſe of heir conſtant intercourſe with, a being in whom ll venerable and amiable attributes unite. It is a enſe of our immediate dependence upon, and con-tant intercourſe with a being, omnipreſent, omniſ-ient, omnipotent, and, at the ſame time, perfectly oly, juſt, and good, that can alone inſpire that deep everence, humility, gratitude, ſubmiſſion, and confidence, which gives the greateſt dignity to our

ſentiments, the nobleſt ardour to our beſt affections, the moſt ſerene and chearful temper of mind under all events, and which thereby qualifies and prompts us to act our parts in life to the moſt advantage, ſo as to make the moſt of our ſituation in every reſpect, by being happy ourſelves, and contributing to the happineſs of others.

Whenever we quit our hold of this great doctrine of the *divine unity*, and imagine that there is no one object of our worſhip in whom all venerable and all amiable attributes unite, there is nothing we can contemplate that is capable of impreſſing our minds ſo *forcibly*, or in ſo *happy* a manner. Our attention being divided by a multiplicity of objects of worſhip, and our ideas of their characters being neceſſarily different, our affections, with reſpect to them, will alſo vary, ſo that we ſhall be apt to love ſome of them, and be afraid of others; and ſince, in conſequence of diſtributing the divine attributes among a number of beings, they will all of them be, neceſſarily, brought nearer to our own level, both our fear and love will be in danger of becoming little more than ſuch as beings like ourſelves are capable of inſpiring. It is alſo impoſſible but that, while we imagine there is ſuch a multiplicity of ſuperior beings, which conſequently muſt have their peculiar characters, we ſhall ſuppoſe them to have their

pecu-

peculiar taſtes and inclinations, and that thoſe of ſome of them will interfere with thoſe of others.

Laſtly, it can hardly be, but that, among ſuch a number of deities, of inferior natures and characters, the creatures of men's imagination, and conſequently ſuppoſed to be in many reſpects like themſelves, ſome of them will be ſuppoſed to be capable of ſuch *capricious* fancies, as men are influenced by; and conſequently that, in order to pleaſe them, mankind would be led to a variety of ſuperſtitious and unmeaning practices, and even ſuch as are immoral and deſtructive.

This appears to have been the natural and univerſal conſequence of polytheiſm; ſo that though at firſt ſight it may ſeem to be a matter of ſpeculation only, whether there be more gods than one, it has, in fact, the moſt ſerious and alarming conſequences in practice. By breaking the unity of God, and diſtributing his attributes among a number of beings, the character of the divine adminiſtration was debaſed, a multiplicity of rites were deviſed, in order to pleaſe a multiplicity of deities, and ſome of them were whimſical, ſome flagitious, and ſome cruel.

That the doctrine of the divine unity is a doctrine of very great importance, may be inferred with certainty, from the very great ſtreſs that is every where laid upon it in the ſcriptures. The ſacred writers always ſpeak of one being, of in-

comprehenſible power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; as the only maker, preſerver, and ſovereign diſpoſer of all things; who has exiſted from all eternity, and who is abſolutely unchangeable in his nature or deſigns. He is the only inviſible being to whom we are authorized to addreſs ourſelves by prayer, while the worſhip of other beings is forbidden in the ſtrongeſt manner; and other gods, whether ſuppoſed to be equal, or ſubordinate to him, are ſpoken of with the greateſt indignation and contempt. More eſpecially, whereas ſome of the heathen gods were thought to preſide over ſome particular parts of nature only, and others over other parts, and ſome of them were ſuppoſed to be the authors of good, and others of evil; *univerſal dominion* is always aſcribed to the one true God, and alſo the appointment of both good and evil, reſpecting both individuals and nations of mankind.

Indeed, it is not poſſible to form an idea of the juſtneſs, or propriety of thoſe magnificent deſcriptions of the perfections and government of God, which occur in the books of ſcripture, without keeping in view the very low ideas which other nations entertained of their Gods; nor can we ſee the propriety of this ſubject being ſo much enlarged upon, and the precepts founded upon it being ſo frequently repeated, or of the ſanctions appointed to guard it being made ſo awful, without conſidering that very great propenſity to idolatry which

which has ever been diſcovered by mankind, and the dreadful conſequences of it with reſpect to the depravity which it has never failed to introduce into the ſentiments and hearts of men, and the abominable and horrid cuſtoms which it has occaſioned reſpecting ſociety. Idolatry has never failed to inſinuate itſelf, under ſome form or other, into every diſpenſation of religion, inſomuch, that even chriſtianity has by no means eſcaped this dreadful corruption.

Having undertaken to exhibit what it is that we learn from revelation, I ſhall alſo endeavour to give ſome idea of the relative importance of every article of faith, by noting the degree of ſtreſs which the ſacred writers lay upon each of them; and I do not think that I can do my duty, and fulfil my engagements in this reſpect, without reciting a conſiderable number of paſſages from the books both of the Old and New Teſtament on this ſubject, and more eſpecially from the former, which relates to the times in which idolatry was peculiarly prevalent. To preſerve in the world the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, ſeems, indeed, to have been the principal object of the whole Jewiſh diſpenſation; and, therefore, we are not ſurprized that our attention is conſtantly kept up to it through the whole of the Old Teſtament hiſtory. Beſides, we are apt to loſe our idea, not only of the *relative*, but alſo of the *real* importance

ance of this doctrine, without recurring to, and reflecting upon what we read in the Old Teſtament concerning it.

The firſt of the Ten Commandments pronounced by an audible and ſupernatural voice from mount Sinai, in the hearing of all the Iſraelites, relates to this ſubject only, Ex. xx. 3. "Thou ſhalt "have no other gods before me." The ſame doctrine of the unity of God, and the ſentiments which reſult from it, are alſo frequently inculcated in all the writings of Moſes; as Deut. vi. 4. "Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord; "and thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all "thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all "thy might."

This paſſage of Moſes is alſo quoted by our Lord, as containing the firſt and the moſt important of all the commandments in the Law, Mark xii. 28—30, "And one of the ſcribes came and aſked "him, Which is the firſt commandment of all? "And Jeſus anſwered him, The firſt of all the "commandments is, Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord "our God is one Lord; and thou ſhalt love the "Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all "thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all "thy ſtrength. This is the firſt commandment."

The divine being himſelf, in a very emphatical manner, aſſerts his ſole title to divinity in Iſ. xliv. 6. "Thus ſaith the Lord, the king of Iſrael, and "his

" his redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first, " and I am the last, and besides me there is no " God. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not " I told thee from that time, and have declared " it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God " besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not " any."

The same doctrine is not only always supposed, but it is likewise frequently and very expressly inculcated in the New Testament; as in 1 Tim. ii. 5. " There is one God, and one mediator be- " tween God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" and, 1 Cor. viii. 4. &c. " We know that an " idol is nothing in the world, and that there is " none other God but one. For though there be " that are called gods, whether in heaven or in " earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many) " but to us there is but one God, the Father, of " whom are all things, and we in him; and one " Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and " we by him." The Apostle James also mentions this doctrine in such a manner as plainly shews that he considered it as the most incontestable maxim in religion. Jam. ii. 19. " Thou believest " that there is one God; thou dost well."

The worship of the true God by images, or symbols, &c. is also most expressly forbidden in the Old Testament. This species of idolatry was commonly practised at the time of the promulgation

tion of the Law, and the ſecond of the Ten Commandments is appropriated to the prohibition of it. Ex. xx. 4, &c. "Thou ſhalt not make unto "thee any graven image, or any likeneſs of any "thing, that is in heaven above, or that is in the "earth beneath, or that is in the waters under "the earth. Thou ſhalt not bow down thyſelf "to them, nor ſerve them: for I the Lord thy "God am a jealous God, viſiting the iniquity of "the fathers upon the children unto the third and "fourth generation of them that hate me; and "ſhewing mercy unto thouſands of them that love "me, and keep my commandments."

To enforce this command, Moſes is particularly careful to remind the Iſraelites, that when God ſpake to them from mount Sinai, they ſaw no reſemblance whatever, but only heard a voice, Deut. iv. 12. &c. "And the Lord ſpake unto you out "of the midſt of the fire: ye heard the voice of "the words, but ſaw no ſimilitude, only ye heard "a voice. Take ye, therefore, good heed to "yourſelves, for ye ſaw no manner of ſimilitude "on the day that the Lord ſpake unto you in Ho-"reb, out of the midſt of the fire, leſt ye corrupt "yourſelves, and make you a graven image, the "ſimilitude of any figure, the likeneſs of male or "female; the likeneſs of any beaſt that is on the "earth, the likeneſs of any winged fowl that flieth "in the air, the likeneſs of any thing that creep-

"eth

" eth on the ground, the likeneſs of any fiſh that
" is in the water beneath the earth. And leſt thou
" lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou
" ſeeſt the ſun, and the moon, and the ſtars, even
" all the hoſt of heaven, ſhouldeſt be driven to
" worſhip them, and ſerve them, which the Lord
" thy God hath divided unto all nations under the
" whole heaven. But the Lord hath taken you,
" and brought you forth out of the iron furnace,
" even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of
" inheritance, as ye are this day."

The reaſon of this prohibition ſeems to be, that, in conſequence of making uſe of images, though only as ſymbols, or tokens of the divine preſence, divine powers will at length, by the natural aſſociation of ideas, be transferred to them, and will be ſuppoſed to reſide in them, and to belong to them. This, indeed, has always been, in fact, the progreſs of human ſentiments. Otherwiſe different images of the ſame god in the heathen world, or of the ſame ſaint in popiſh countries, could never have been imagined to be poſſeſſed of different powers, which is well known to be the caſe; ſo that whatever may have been the *origin* of this mode of worſhip, and in whatever light it may be viewed by the more intelligent of thoſe who practiſe and apologiſe for it, with the common people, at leaſt, it is, in reality, nothing but the worſhip of wood, and ſtone, and metal; and in this light

it is juſtly conſidered by the ſacred writers. With a view to exclude this kind of worſhip, God is likewiſe ſaid to be *inviſible*, Heb. xi. 27, and to "dwell in light which no man can approach unto, "whom no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee." 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The *works of creation* are in a peculiar manner aſcribed to the one true God, and eſpecially the creation of the heavenly bodies, which were the firſt objects of idolatrous worſhip in the Gentile world. The firſt book of Moſes begins with reciting all the viſible parts of the univerſe, as the work and appointment of God, Gen. i. 1. "In "the beginning God created the heaven, and the "earth." Ver. 16. "And God made two great "lights, the greater light to rule the day; and the "leſſer light to rule the night: he made the ſtars "alſo." The eaſe with which all theſe magnificent works were produced is moſt happily expreſſed by repreſenting them as the immediate effect of a ſimple command, Gen. i. 3. "And God ſaid, "Let there be light: and there was light." In the ſame manner alſo the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, Pſ. xxxiii. 6. &c. "By the word of the Lord were "the heavens made, and all the hoſt of them by "the breath of his mouth. He ſpake, and it was "done; he commanded, and it ſtood faſt."

The vain pretences of the heathen gods are expoſed on this very account, viz. their not having made

made the world. Jer. x. 10. &c. "The Lord "is the true God, and an everlaſting king. The "gods that have not made the heavens, and the "earth, even they ſhall periſh from the earth, "and from under theſe heavens. He hath made "the earth by his power, he hath eſtabliſhed the "world by his wiſdom, and hath ſtretched out the "heavens by his diſcretion."

When the people of Lyſtra would have paid divine honours to Barnabas and Paul, ſuppoſing the former of them to have been Jupiter, and the latter Mercury; Paul, with peculiar propriety, ſays to them, Acts xiv. 15, "Sirs, why do ye "theſe things? We alſo are men of like paſſions "with you, and preach unto you that ye ſhould "turn from theſe vanities, unto the living God, "who made the heaven and earth, and the ſea, "and all things that are therein." For neither the people of Lyſtra, nor any of the idolatrous Greeks or Romans, had the leaſt idea of even Jupiter, the chief of their gods, having been at all concerned in the creation of the heavens or the earth. To the ſame purpoſe, alſo, the apoſtle Paul addreſſes himſelf to the people of Athens, Acts xvii. 24. &c. "God that made the world, "and all things therein, ſeeing that he is lord of "heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made "with hands, neither is worſhipped with men's "hands, as though he needed any thing; ſeeing

"he

" he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;
" and hath made of one blood all nations of men,
" for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and
" hath determined the times before appointed, and
" the bounds of their habitation." All this excellent doctrine would be quite new to his Athenian audience, who had never been uſed to aſcribe ſuch extraordinary powers to any of the gods which were the objects of their worſhip.

The abſolute *property* which the only true God has in the works of which he is the author, is often finely expreſſed in the books of ſcripture. Abraham, addreſſing himſelf to the ſupreme being, calls him " the moſt high God, the poſſeſſor of heaven
" and earth," Gen. xiv. 22. David, in his laſt ſpeech, delivered in the preſence of all the congregation of Iſrael, addreſſing himſelf to God, ſays, 1 Chron. xxix. 10, &c. " Bleſſed be thou, Lord
" God of Iſrael, our Father, for ever and ever.
" Thine, O Lord, is the greatneſs, and the
" power, and the glory, and the victory, and the
" majeſty: for all that is in the heaven and in the
" earth, is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O
" Lord, and thou art exalted, as head over all."
Pſ. xxiv. 1. &c. " The earth is the Lord's, and
" the fulneſs thereof, the world, and they that
" dwell therein; for he hath founded it upon the
" ſeas, and eſtabliſhed it upon the floods. Pſ. xcv.
3. " The Lord is a great God, and a great king
" above

" above all gods. In his hands are the deep places " of the earth, the ſtrength of the hills is his alſo. " The ſea is his, and he made it; and his hands " formed the dry land. O come, let us worſhip, " and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our " Maker; for he is our God, and we are the peo- " ple of his paſture, and the ſheep of his hand." Moſes alſo was careful to impreſs the Iſraelites with this important truth, as well as with the belief of the unity, and creating power of God, Deut. x. 14. " Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of " heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth alſo, " with all that therein is."

The abſolute ſovereignty of God is alſo ſtrongly expreſſed by Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 21. " Let no man " glory in men, for all things are your's, and ye " are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's." Alſo, 1 Cor. xv. 24. " Then cometh the end, when he ſhall " have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the " Father, when he ſhall have put down all rule, " and all authority, and power; for he muſt reign " till he hath put all enemies under his feet. But " when he ſaith all things are put under him, it is " manifeſt that he is excepted who did put all " things under him. And when all things ſhall " be ſubdued under him, then ſhall the Son alſo " himſelf be ſubject unto him that put all things " under him, that God may be all in all.

The

The one true God is alſo repreſented, in the ſcriptures, as the ſole *preſerver*, and conſtant *upholder* of all things. Upon the occaſion of the ſolemn faſt, and prayer, which was obſerved by the Jews upon their return from the Babyloniſh captivity, they ſay, Neh. ix. 5. &c. "Bleſſed be thy glo-"rious name, which is exalted above all bleſſing "and praiſe. Thou, even thou art Lord alone, "thou haſt made heaven, the heaven of heavens, "with all their hoſt, the earth, and all things that "are therein, the ſea, and all that is therein, and "thou preſerveſt them all, and the hoſt of heaven "worſhip thee." David expreſſes the ſame ſentiment more fully, Pſ. cxix. 90. "Thou haſt eſtabliſhed "the earth, and it abideth. They continue this "day, according to thine ordinances, for all are "thy ſervants."

The divine ſovereignty, with reſpect to the *abſolute diſpoſal* of all things, is a neceſſary conſequence of his ſole property in them; and this alſo is frequently and ſtrongly expreſſed in the ſcriptures, Pſ. ciii, 19. "The Lord hath prepared his "throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth "over all." Perhaps the fulleſt and moſt explicit acknowledgment of this kind, is that which was made by Nebuchadnezzar, after his humiliation, Dan. iv. 1. 35. 37. "Nebuchadnezzar the king, "unto all people, nations, and languages that "dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto "you.

"you. I thought it good to ſhew the ſigns and "wonders, that the high God have wrought to- "ward me. How great are his ſigns! and how "mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an "everlaſting kingdom, and his dominion is from "generation to generation. And all the inhabi- "tants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he "doeth according to his will in the army of hea- "ven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: "and none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, "What doeſt thou? Now I Nebuchadnezzar "praiſe and extol and honour the king of heaven, "all whoſe works are truth, and his ways judg- "ment, and thoſe that walk in pride he is able to "debaſe."

The divine being himſelf makes the following ſolemn declaration, Iſ. xlvi. 9. "Remember the "former things of old, for I am God, and there "is none elſe; I am God, and there is none like "me. Declaring the end from the beginning, "and from antient times the things that are not "yet done, ſaying, My counſel ſhall ſtand, and I "will do all my pleaſure. I have ſpoken it, I "will alſo bring it to paſs; I have purpoſed it, I "will alſo do it." Daniel, in his thankſgiving to God, on account of the revelation that was made to him of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, ſays, Dan. ii. 20. "Bleſſed be the name of God for ever and "ever: for wiſdom and might are his. And he

"changeth

" changeth the times and the ſeaſons; he removeth " kings, and ſetteth up kings: he giveth wiſdom " unto the wiſe, and knowledge to them that know " underſtanding." Cyrus made the ſame acknowledgment, when, in his decree for rebuilding the temple of Jeruſalem, he ſaid, Ezra i. 2. " Thus " ſaith Cyrus king of Perſia, The Lord God of " heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the " earth, and he hath charged me to build him an " houſe at Jeruſalem, which is in Judah."

Power and *wiſdom* are aſcribed to this one God in the higheſt degree, and in the moſt emphatical manner in the books of ſcripture. Indeed, this is neceſſarily implied in what has been already recited concerning his being the maker and governor of all things. I ſhall, however, quote a few paſſages with this view only. In Iſ. xxviii. 29. he is ſaid to be " wonderful in counſel, and excellent in " working;" and in 1 Tim. i. 17. he is called " the only wiſe God," and alſo in Rom. xvi. 27. and Jude 25. But in Iſ. xl. 12. &c. we have a moſt magnificent deſcription of the power, wiſdom, and univerſal ſupremacy of the one true God, as oppoſed to the objects of worſhip in the heathen world. " Who hath meaſured the waters in the " hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with " the ſpan, and comprehended the duſt of the " earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains " in ſcales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath

" directed

" directed the ſpirit of the Lord, or being his coun-
" ſellor, hath taught him? With whom took he
" counſel, and who inſtructed him, and taught
" him knowledge, and ſhewed him the way of un-
" derſtanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop
" of a bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt
" of the balance: behold, he taketh up the iſles as
" a very little thing. All nations before him are
" as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs
" than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will
" ye liken God? or what likeneſs will ye com-
" pare unto him? Have ye not known? have ye
" not heard? hath it not been told you from the
" beginning? have ye not underſtood from the
" foundations of the earth? It is he that ſitteth
" upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants
" thereof are as graſshoppers; that ſtretcheth out
" the heavens as a curtain, and ſpreadeth them out
" as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes
" to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth
" as vanity. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold
" who hath created theſe things, that bringeth out
" their hoſt by number: he calleth them all by
" names, by the greatneſs of his might, for that
" he is ſtrong in power, not one faileth. Why
" ſayeſt thou, O Jacob, and ſpeakeſt, O Iſrael,
" My way is hid from the Lord, and my judg-
" ment is paſſed over from my God? Haſt thou
" not known? had thou not heard, that the ever-

"lasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends "of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? "there is no searching of his understanding. He "giveth power to the faint; and to them that have "no might, he increaseth strength."

The Gentile nations imagined that some Gods had power over one country, and others over another; and even that some had power in the hills, and others in the valleys only. There are, however, two remarkable pieces of history in the Old Testament, in which we find that, for the instruction of the Israelites, the divine being particularly attended to, and by the most signal displays of his own power, refuted those absurd opinions.

Senacherib, king of Assyria, imagining that the God of Israel was no other than the God of that particular country, and of no greater power than the Gods of other countries, insulted Hezekiah, king of Judah, which he was then about to invade, with a detail of the other kingdoms which he had lately conquered, saying, Is. xxxvii. 10. &c. "Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah, king of Judah, "saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest "deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be "given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Be- "hold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria "have done to all lands, by destroying them utter- "ly, and shalt thou be delivered? Have the Gods "of the nations delivered them which my fathers

"have

"have deſtroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Re-
"zeph, and the children of Eden which were in
"Telaſar? Where is the king of Hamath, and
"the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of
"Sepharvaim, Henah, and Ivah?" Hezekiah, in his prayer to God upon this occaſion, avows very different ſentiments, acknowledging the ſupremacy of the one true God, and putting his truſt in him only; for laying open the letter which he received from Senacherib before the Lord, he prayed, ſaying, Iſ. xxxvii. 16. "O Lord of hoſts,
"God of Iſrael, that dwelleſt betwen the cheru-
"bim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all
"the kingdoms of the earth, thou haſt made hea-
"ven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and
"hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and ſee: and
"hear all the words of Senacherib, who hath ſent
"to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord,
"the kings of Aſſyria have laid waſte all the na-
"tions and their countries, and have caſt their
"Gods into the fire: for they were no Gods, but
"the work of mens hands, wood and ſtone:
"therefore they have deſtroyed them. Now there-
"fore, O Lord our God, ſave us from his hand,
"that all the kingdoms of the earth may know,
"that thou art the Lord, even thou only." Upon this prayer, the prophet Iſaiah was ſent to encourage Hezekiah, with a promiſe of the utter deſtruc-

tion of the army of Senacherib, which was preſently after accompliſhed, in a ſudden and miraculous manner.

The Syrians having been worſted in the hilly country, during their war with the Iſraelites, imagined that the God of Iſrael had power there, but not in the valleys; and, therefore, endeavoured to bring the Iſraelites to an engagement in a flat country. But there came a man of God, and ſpake unto the king of Iſrael, and ſaid, 1 Kings xx. 28. "Thus ſaith the Lord, Becauſe the Syrians have "ſaid, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not "God of the valleys: therefore will I deliver all "this great multitude into thine hand, and ye ſhall "know that I am the Lord." Accordingly the hiſtorian informs us, that, in a battle which was fought on the ſeventh day from that time, the Iſraelites gained a moſt ſignal victory over the Syrians.

It was an opinion that prevailed from very early times in the eaſt, and which ſpread from thence into the weſtern parts of the world, that the *evil* there is in the world was not the production of a good being, but aroſe from an evil intelligent principle, either co-ordinate with the good one, or ſubordinate to him; and as the attributes of the good principle were divided, and diſtributed by them among a number of beings, ſo alſo inviſible powers of an evil nature were multiplied, and became

came the object of ſeveral modes of worſhip. Againſt this principle of idolatry the ſtrongeſt declarations are made in the ſcriptures, which aſcribe both good and evil to the ſame ſupreme mind, who effects his excellent purpoſes by means of them both alike.

Thus, the divine being, addreſſed himſelf to Cyrus (though long before that prince was born) in whoſe country the opinion above-mentioned was moſt firmly eſtabliſhed, ſays Iſ. xlv. 4. &c. "For "Jacob my ſervant's ſake, and Iſrael mine elect, I "have even called thee by thy name: I have ſur-"named thee, though thou haſt not known me. "I am the Lord, and there is none elſe, there is "no God beſides me: I girded thee, though thou "haſt not known me: That they may know from "the riſing of the ſun, and from the Weſt, that "there is none beſides me, I am the Lord, and "there is none elſe. I form the light, and create "darkneſs: I make peace, and create evil: I the "Lord do all theſe things." To the ſame purpoſe Jeremiah, in Lament. iii. 37, &c. "Who is he "that ſays, and it cometh to paſs, when the Lord "commanded it not. Out of the mouth of the "moſt high, proceedeth not evil and good; And Amos iii. 6. "Shall there be evil in a city, and "the Lord hath not done it? Job alſo is made to expreſs the ſame ſentiment, when he ſays, Job. i. 21. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

" away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord:" and again, Job. ii. 10. " Shall we receive good at " the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive " evil?"

Laſtly, in the courſe of the ſcripture hiſtory, not only all proſperous events, but alſo all calamitous ones are conſtantly aſcribed to God, as the ſole governor of the world, and the ſovereign diſpoſer of all events, reſpecting both nations and individuals of mankind. Thus the deſtruction of the old world by a flood, as well as the interpoſition in favour of Noah and his family; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the ſaving of Lot: the plagues of Egypt, as well as the deliverance of the Iſraelites; and alſo all the good and evil that befel either the Iſraelites themſelves, or the neighbouring nations with whom they had intercourſe, are equally referred to the ſame ſuperintending providence, adminiſtering both good and evil, according to the characters and conduct of men.

The moſt ſtriking ideas are given us in the ſcriptures of the *eternity*, the *omnipreſence*, and *unchangeable nature* of the true God. I ſhall only quote a few, out of numberleſs paſſages to this purpoſe. Moſes, in that prayer of his, which makes the xcth Pſalm, addreſſes the divine being in the following manner: " Lord, thou haſt been our dwelling " place in all generations. Before the mountains " were brought forth, or ever thou hadſt formed

" the

" the earth and the world: even from everlaſting " to everlaſting thou art God." Solomon, at the dedication of his temple, addreſſing the divine being, in the preſence of all the people, ſays, 1 Kings viii. 27. " But will God, indeed, dwell on the " earth? behold, the heaven, and heaven of hea- " vens cannot contain thee, how much leſs this houſe that I have builded?" By the prophet Jeremiah, the divine being ſays, Jer. xxiii. 23. &c. " Am I a God at hand, ſaith the Lord, and not a " God afar off? Can any hide himſelf in ſecret " places that I ſhall not ſee him? ſaith the Lord: " do not I fill heaven and earth? ſaith the Lord." In Pſ. xxxiii. 13. we read, " The Lord looketh " from heaven: he beholdeth all the ſons of men. " From the place of his habitation he looketh upon " all the inhabitants of the earth. He faſhioneth " their hearts alike: he conſidereth all their " works."

In the cxxxix Pſalm, we have a moſt admirable deſcription of the *univerſal preſence* of God, and alſo of the intimate knowledge that he has of every thing belonging to man. Pſ. cxxxix. 1. &c. " O Lord, thou haſt ſearched me, and known me. " Thou knoweſt my down-ſitting, [and mine up- " riſing, thou underſtandeſt my thought afar off. " Thou compaſſeth my path, and my lying down, " and art acquainted with all my ways. For there

" is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou " knoweſt it altogether. Thou haſt beſet me be- " hind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. " Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is " high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither ſhall I " go from thy ſpirit? or whither ſhall I flee from " thy preſence? If I aſcend up into heaven thou " art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou " art there. If I take the wings of the morning, " and dwell in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea: " even there ſhall thy hand lead me, and thy right " hand ſhall hold me. If I ſay, Surely the dark- " neſs ſhall cover me: even the night ſhall be " light about me. Yea, the darkneſs hideth not " from thee; but the night ſhineth as the day; " the darkneſs and the light are both alike to thee."

The knowledge which the divine being has of the *hearts of men*, whatever pains they may take to conceal them, is ſtrongly expreſſed in Jer. xvii. 9. " The heart is deceitful above all things, and de- " ſperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord " ſearch the heart, I try the reins, even to give " every man according to his ways, and according " to the fruit of his doings."

The *unchangeable nature* of God is ſtrongly aſ- ſerted by himſelf in Mal. iii. 6. " I am the " Lord, I change not:" and it is likewiſe ex- preſſed, in a peculiarly beautiful and emphatical manner, Pſ. cii. 25. &c. " Of old haſt thou laid

" the

" the foundation of the earth: and the heavens " are the work of thy hands. They ſhall periſh, " but thou ſhalt endure: yea, all of them ſhall " wax old like a garment; as a veſture ſhalt thou " change them, and they ſhall be changed. But " thou art the ſame, and thy years ſhall have no " end." The apoſtle James alſo ſays, ch. i. 17: " With God there is no variableneſs, neither " ſhadow of turning."

Laſtly, the *incomprehenſible nature* of God is finely expreſſed in ſeveral parts of ſcripture, eſpecially in the following paſſages of the book of Job xi. 7. " Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt " thou find out the almighty unto perfection? It " is as high as heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper " than hell, what canſt thou know? The mea- " ſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader " than the ſea." xxxvi. 26. " Behold, God is " great, and we know him not: xxxvii. 23. " Touching the almighty, we cannot find him " out." David alſo ſays, Pſ. cxlv. 3. " Great " is the Lord, and greatly to be praiſed; and his " greatneſs is unſearchable."

The pretences of the *heathen gods* are refuted in ſeveral parts of ſcripture in a moſt effectual, and ſometimes in a very humorous manner. It is with reſpect to the knowledge of *future events* that the true God more eſpecially challenges the gods of the heathens; as in Iſ. xli. 21. &c. " Produce

"your cauſe, ſaith the Lord: bring forth your "ſtrong reaſons, ſaith the king of Jacob. Let "them bring them forth, and ſhew us what ſhall "happen: let them ſhew the former things what "they be, that we may conſider them, and know "the latter end of them, or declare us things for "to come. Shew the things that are to come "hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: "yea, do good or do evil, that we may be diſ-"mayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are "of nothing, and your work of nought: an abo-"mination is he that chooſeth you."

When it is foretold that the idols of Babylon ſhould be carried away captive, it is ſaid, If. xlvi. 1. "Bel boweth down, Nebo ſtoopeth, their "idols were upon the beaſts, and upon the cattle: "your carriages were heavy loaden, they are a "burden to the weary beaſt. They ſtoop, they "bow down together, they could not deliver the "burden, but themſelves are gone into captivity." Jeremiah alſo ridicules theſe gods in a ſimilar manner, Jer. x. 1. &c. "Hear ye the word which "the Lord ſpeaketh unto you, O houſe of Iſrael. "Thus ſaith the Lord, Learn not the way of the "heathen, and be not diſmayed at the ſigns of "heaven, for the heathen are diſmayed at them. "For the cuſtoms of the people are vain: for one "cutteth a tree out of the foreſt (the work of the "hands of the workman) with the ax. They

"deck

"deck it with ſilver and with gold, they faſten it "with nails and with hammers, that it move not. "They are upright as the palm-tree, but ſpeak "not: they muſt needs be borne, becauſe they "cannot go: be not afraid of them, for they can- "not do evil, neither alſo is it in them to do "good. Foraſmuch as there is none like unto "thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is "great in might. Who would not fear thee, O "king of nations, for to thee doth it appertain."

The overthrow of Pharoah and his hoſt is repreſented by Moſes as the triumph of the true God over the falſe ones, Ex. xv. 2. "The Lord is "my ſtrength and ſong, and he is become my ſal- "vation: v. 11. "Who is like unto thee, O "Lord, amongſt the gods? who is like thee, glo- "rious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes, doing won- "ders."

Elijah makes uſe of a fine piece of irony, when he addreſſes the prieſts of Baal, on the occaſion of the conteſt which he propoſed between the true God and that imaginary one. When theſe prieſts were unable to procure a ſupernatural fire, to burn their ſacrifices, we read 1 Kings xviii. 27. "And "it came to paſs at noon, that Elijah mocked "them, and ſaid, Cry aloud: for he is a god, "either he is talking, or he is purſuing, or he is "in a journey, or peradventure he ſleepeth, and "muſt be awaked. And they cried aloud, and

"cut themſelves after their manner with knives "and lancets, till the blood guſhed out upon "them; but there was neither voice, nor any to "anſwer, nor any that regarded." At the concluſion of this affair, the people, who were exceedingly prone to idolatry, and therefore ſtrongly prejudiced in favour of the prieſts of Baal, cried out, "The Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the "God."

We find in the book of Daniel, that both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, though ſtrongly attached to their idol worſhip, were compelled to make the ſame conceſſion. See Dan. ii. xvii. iii. 29. When Daniel was delivered from the lions, we are informed, Dan. vi. 25. that then Darius wrote "unto all people, nations, and languages, "that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied "unto you. I make a decree, that in every do-"minion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear "before the God of Daniel: for he is the living "God, and ſtedfaſt for ever, and his kingdom is "that which ſhall not be deſtroyed, and his do-"minion ſhall be even unto the end."

Conſidering the abominable flagitious cuſtoms, and the cruel and horrid rites of the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan, and other neighbouring nations, and the ſhocking depravity of the hearts, as well as of the lives of men, which was the neceſſary conſequence of an addictedneſs to thoſe monſtrous

ſtrous kinds of idolatry, it is no wonder that all poſſible proviſion was made to prevent the Iſraelites from giving into it, and to perpetuate in that one nation the worſhip of the only living and true God, amidſt the univerſal defection from his worſhip among all other nations.

Abraham is ſuppoſed to have been called from his country, where idolatry is generally thought to have been firſt introduced, about the time when it began to revolt from the worſhip of the true God; and it is not improbable that this was the caſe, as not long after we find idols among the gods of Laban, who lived in the ſame country, that his daughter Rachel carried ſome of them away with her, and that afterwards Jacob was obliged to ſearch all his family, and commanded them to put away all their falſe gods. See Gen. xxxv. 2.

The prohibitions of idolatry by Moſes are frequent, and exceedingly emphatical. Beſides the firſt and ſecond commandments, quoted before, we read, Ex. xxiii. 13. "And in all things that "I have ſaid unto you, be circumſpect; and make "no mention of the name of other Gods, neither "let it be heard out of thy mouth."

The orders which the Jews received concerning the extirpation of the inhabitants of Canaan reſpected this caſe, and nothing elſe. The ſettlement of the Iſraelites in that country, is expreſsly ſaid

ſaid to have been delayed "becauſe the iniquity of "the Amorites was not full," Gen. xv. 16. We read in Deut. xii. 29. &c. "When the Lord thy "God ſhall cut off the nations from before thee, "whither thou goeſt to poſſeſs them, and thou "ſucceedeſt them, and dwelleſt in their land: "take heed to thyſelf that thou be not ſnared by "following them, after that they be deſtroyed from "before thee, and that thou enquire not after "their gods, ſaying, How did theſe nations ſerve "their gods? even ſo will I do likewiſe. Thou "ſhalt not do ſo unto the Lord thy God; for "every abomination to the Lord which he hateth, "have they done unto their gods: for even their "ſons and their daughters they have burnt in the "fire to their gods:" Deut. xii. 2. &c. "Ye "ſhall utterly deſtroy all the places wherein the "nations which ye ſhall poſſeſs ſerved their gods, "upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, "and under every green tree. And you ſhall "overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, "and burn their groves with fire, and you ſhall "hew down the graven images of their gods, "and deſtroy the names of them out of that "place."

That their motive for this was not the luſt of plunder, is evident from the orders which they received, and with which they complied, not to take the ſilver and the gold belonging to their idols, but

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to deſtroy it utterly, Deut. vii. 25. "The graven "images of their gods ſhall ye burn with fire: "thou ſhalt not deſire the ſilver or gold that is on "them, nor take it unto thee, leſt thou be ſnared "therein: for it is an abomination to the Lord "thy God. Neither ſhalt thou bring an abomi- "nation into thy houſe, leſt thou be a curſed thing "like it: but thou ſhalt utterly deteſt it, and "thou ſhalt utterly abhor it, for it is a curſed "thing."

Nor were they the inhabitants of Canaan only who were to be extirpated on account of their idolatry; for the Iſraelites themſelves were to have as little mercy ſhewn them on the ſame account, Lev. xx. 1. "And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſay- "ing, Again thou ſhalt ſay to the children of Iſ- "rael, Whoſoever he be of the children of Iſrael, "or of the ſtrangers that ſojourn in Iſrael, that "giveth any of his ſeed unto Molech; he ſhall "ſurely be put to death: the people of the land "ſhall ſtone him with ſtones." Deut. xiii. 6. &c. "If thy brother, the ſon of thy mother, or thy "ſon, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy boſom, "or thy friend, which is as thine own ſoul, en- "tice thee ſecretly, ſaying, Let us go and ſerve "other gods, which thou haſt not known, thou, "nor thy fathers: namely, of the gods of the "people which are round about you, nigh unto "thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of

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" the earth, even unto the other end of the earth;
" thou ſhalt not conſent unto him, nor hearken
" unto him, neither ſhall thine eye pity him,
" neither ſhalt thou ſpare, neither ſhalt thou con-
" ceal him; but thou ſhalt ſurely kill him; thine
" hand ſhall be firſt upon him to put him to death,
" and afterwards the hand of all the people. And
" thou ſhalt ſtone him with ſtones, that he die;
" becauſe he hath ſought to thruſt thee away from
" the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of
" the land of Egypt, from the houſe of bondage.
" And all Iſrael ſhall hear and fear, and ſhall do
" no more any ſuch wickedneſs as this is among
" you. If thou ſhalt hear ſay in one of thy cities,
" which the Lord thy God hath given thee to
" dwell there, ſaying, certain men, the children
" of Belial, are gone out from among you, and
" have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city,
" ſaying, Let us go and ſerve other gods (which
" ye have not known). Then ſhalt thou enquire
" and make ſearch, and aſk diligently: and be-
" hold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that
" ſuch abomination is wrought among you:
" Thou ſhalt ſurely ſmite the inhabitants of that
" city with the edge of the ſword, deſtroying it
" utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle
" thereof, with the edge of the ſword. And thou
" ſhalt gather all the ſpoil of it into the midſt of
" the ſtreet thereof, and ſhalt burn with fire the
" city,

"city, and all the ſpoil thereof every whit, for "the Lord thy God: and it ſhall be an heap for "ever, it ſhall not be built again. And there "ſhall cleave nought of the curſed thing to thine "hand: that the Lord may turn from the fierce-"neſs of his anger, and ſhew thee mercy, and "have compaſſion upon thee, and multiply thee, "as he hath ſworn unto thy fathers; when thou "ſhalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, "to keep all his commandments which I com-"mand thee this day, to do that which is right in "the eyes of the Lord thy God."

Theſe were certainly ſevere and awful meaſures, but they are abundantly vindicated by the conſideration of the evils which they were intended to prevent. Theſe evils were indeed of the moſt alarming nature, defeating the very end of the whole Jewiſh conſtitution, which was eſpecially calculated to preſerve the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God amidſt a general defection from it, and to put a ſtop to the progreſs of the moſt abominable and deſtructive vices, which was the neceſſary conſequence of that defection.

The divine diſpleaſure at idolatry was likewiſe expreſſed by the utter deſtruction of all the idolatrous nations of antient times, viz. the Canaanites, Egyptians, Syrians, Aſſyrians, Babylonians, and Tyrians; and alſo by the repeated captivities, and other awful judgments, which never failed to be

inflicted

inflicted upon the Iſraelites themſelves, whenever they revolted from the one true God.

In the New Teſtament theſe awful denunciations of the judgments of God againſt idolatry, are not repeated with reſpect to the Jews, becauſe that people had been effectually cured of their proneneſs to idolatry by the Babyloniſh captivity; but we ſee the ſame ſentiments kept up, and referred to, upon every proper occaſion, and very preſſing exhortations and cautions are given to the Gentile churches, reſpecting this ſubject. Our Lord replies to his tempter, by quoting the books of Moſes, Mat. iv. 10. "Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, "and him only ſhalt thou ſerve." The abſtaining from meats offered to idols, was one of the *neceſſary things* which all the apoſtles enjoined upon the Gentile converts, Acts, xv. 29. The apoſtle Paul moſt earneſtly and affectionately warns the Corinthian converts on this ſubject, 1 Cor. x. 7. "Neither be ye idolaters as were ſome of them:" (that is the Iſraelites) v. 14. "Wherefore my "dearly beloved, flee from idolatry:" v. 19. "What ſay I then? that the idol is any thing, or "that which is offered in ſacrifice to idols is any "thing? But I ſay, that the things which the "Gentiles ſacrificed, they ſacrifice to demons*,

* For ſo it ought to have been tranſlated.

and

"and not to God: and I would not that ye ſhould "have fellowſhip with demons. Ye cannot drink "the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: "ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and "of the table of demons." The apoſtle John alſo concludes his General Epiſtle to the chriſtian churches with theſe words, 1 John v. 21. "Lit-"tle children, keep yourſelves from idols." Laſtly, the eating of meat ſacrificed to idols was one of the charges which our Lord, after his aſcenſion, brought againſt the churches of Pergamos, and Thyatira, Rev. ii. 14. 20.

Through the whole of the New Teſtament, there is not ſo much as one example of any inviſible being, who is addreſſed as the object of prayer, but the ſame one living and true God, who is alſo called "the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt," (Eph. iii. 14. "For this cauſe I "bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord "Jeſus Chriſt,") and every inſtance of homage approaching to divine is ſtrongly repreſſed. When Cornelius fell down at the feet of Peter, though it cannot be ſuppoſed that he who was himſelf a worſhipper of the true God, meant to pay him divine honours, the apoſtle replied, Acts x. 26, "Stand "up; I myſelf alſo am a man." And twice that John fell down before the angel who was explaining to him the viſions of the book of Revelations, he

he was rebuked in the ſame manner, Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 9. "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-"ſervant, and of thy brethren that have the teſ-"timony of Jeſus: worſhip God."

Conſidering how ſtrongly this great article, the worſhip of one God only, is guarded in all the books of ſcripture, it would ſeem impoſſible that it ſhould ever be infringed by any who profeſs to hold the books of the Old and New Teſtament for the rule of their faith and practice; and yet we ſhall ſee, that this very article was the ſubject of one of the firſt and the moſt radical of all the corruptions of chriſtianity. For upon the very ſame principles, and in the very ſame manner, by which dead men came to be worſhipped by the antient idolaters, there was introduced into the chriſtian church, in the firſt place, the idolatrous worſhip of Jeſus Chriſt, then that of the Virgin Mary; and laſtly, that of innumerable other ſaints, and of angels alſo; and this *modern chriſtian idolatry* has been attended with all the abſurdities, and with *ſome*, but not *all* the immoralities, of the antient heathen idolatry. It has, however, evidently promoted a very great neglect of the duties we owe both to God and man.

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SECTION II.

Of the moral attributes of God.

THAT God is a being of the greateſt *purity* and *rectitude* is another important doctrine of re-led religion; and though, like the doctrine of divine *unity*, it may be ſaid to be the dictate of ure, it was a doctrine which mankind had in a at meaſure overlooked, and never ſufficiently at-ded to. Entertaining low notions of the beings whom they ſuppoſed that they immediately de-ided, and aſcribing to them a great variety of ects and purſuits, ſome of which were exceed-ly trifling and unworthy, they had recourſe to ariety of methods by which they thought to re-nmend themſelves to their favour, many of ich had no connection with moral virtue, and ne of them were groſs violations of the moſt fun-nental rules of it.

Judging of their Gods as having been, many of m, men no better than themſelves, but ſubject envy and jealouſy, they were in general more ecially prone to that kind of ſuperſtition which iſts in mortifying themſelves, in order to re-nmend them to God. If any great calamity be-fel

ſel them, imagining the wrath of their God was to be appeaſed, like that of revengeful and unreaſonable men, with ſomething that coſt them very dear, they ſometimes did not ſpare their own children, but put them to a cruel death in their ſacrifices; and they made dreadful havock of the reſt of their ſpecies on much leſs occaſions.

In the Jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, on the contrary, we ſee the moral character of the divine being ſet in the cleareſt, the ſtrongeſt, and moſt amiable light. We find that the God with whom we have to do loves all his creatures; that if he chaſtiſes them it is with reluctance, and only for their good, and eſpecially for their improvement in virtue; that he ſtands in no need of any of his creatures, and has no pleaſure either in the compliments they pay him, or the gifts and ſacrifices which they make to him, though, as an expreſſion of their homage, dependence, and gratitude, he may think proper to require ſuch things.

The proper ſeat of virtue and ſolid happineſs being in the heart, the divine being, as his character is revealed to us in our books of ſcripture, appears to be moſt ſolicitous that our hearts and affections be right, and not to pay much attention to mere external actions, which was every thing that the heathen Gods were imagined to trouble themſelves about. On the contrary, the God of the Jews and chriſtians is always repreſented as ſearching the

the hearts, and as attending to the inmoſt thoughts, inclinations, and purpoſes of the mind; ſo that no ſecret or intended iniquity can eſcape his animadverſion.

In order to exhibit the doctrines of the ſcriptures concerning the moral attributes of God, I ſhall, firſt conſider his *purity* or *holineſs*, including his regard to moral virtue in general, and then his goodneſs, mercy, and veracity, in the order in which they are here mentioned.

Paſſages which expreſs the purity or holineſs of God in general, are exceedingly numerous, and many of them very emphatical; as Lev. xix. 2. "Ye ſhall be holy: for I the Lord your God am "holy." The angels, in the viſion of Iſaiah, vi. 3. are repreſented as crying one to another, "Holy "holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth "is full of his glory." Moſes, in that remarkable ſong which he compoſed for the Iſraelites, in order that they might commit it to memory, ſays, Deut. xxxii. 3. "I will publiſh the name of the Lord: "aſcribe ye greatneſs unto our God. He is the "rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are "judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, "juſt and right is he." Habbakuk, addreſſing himſelf to God, ſays, ch. i. 12: "Art thou not "from everlaſting, O Lord my God, mine holy "one? Thou art of purer eyes than to behold "evil, and canſt not look on iniquity." When David

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David enumerates the particulars which conſtitute the character of the man who is moſt in favour with God, he draws a picture of the moſt diſtinguiſhed moral virtue, " Pſ. xv. 1. &c. " Lord " who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle? who ſhall " dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh up- " rightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh " the truth in his heart, &c." Laſtly, the apoſtle James ſays, ch. i. 13. " Let no man ſay when " he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God " cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he " any man."

A thouſand paſſages in the ſcripture expreſs the pleaſure which God takes in good men, and the happineſs which he reſerves for them, Pſ. cxlvii. 11. " The Lord taketh pleaſure in them that fear him, " in thoſe that hope in his mercy." Pſ. xxxvii. 23, 24. " The ſteps of a good man are ordered by " the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though " he fall, he ſhall not be utterly caſt down: for " the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Pſ. ciii. 13. Like as a " father pitieth his children: " ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Pſ. lxxxiv. 11. " For the Lord God is a ſun and " ſhield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no " good thing will he with-hold from them that " walk uprightly. O Lord of hoſts, bleſſed is the " man that truſteth in thee." On the other hand, the wicked are always repreſented as the ſole objects

of

of the divine diſpleaſure and vengeance, as Iſ. xlviii. 22. and lvii. 21. "There is no peace, ſaith my "God, to the wicked." And all the judgments which the divine being is repreſented as interpoſing to inflict, are always ſaid to have been on account of wickedneſs only, as in the caſe of our firſt parents, the inhabitants of the old world, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, and many others.

Whereas the favour of the heathen gods was ſuppoſed to be gained by the performance of certain rites and ceremonies, while moral virtue was ſeldom thought to be of any uſe for that purpoſe; the contrary is expreſſed in the ſtrongeſt terms, with reſpect to the true God; and admonitions of this kind are repeated again and again in the books of ſcripture. David, confeſſing his ſins before God, ſays, Pſ. li. 16. "Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, "elſe would I give it: thou delighteſt not in "burnt offering. The ſacrifices of God are a "broken ſpirit: a broken and a contrite heart, "O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe." One of the fineſt paſſages in the ſacred writings to this purpoſe is, Iſ. i. 13. &c. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye "rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the law of our "God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what pur-"poſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me? "ſaith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings "of rams, and the fat of fed beaſts, and I delight

" not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of
" he goats. When ye come to appear before me,
" who hath required this at your hand, to tread
" my courts: Bring no more vain oblations, in-
" cenſe is an abomination unto me, the new-moons
" and ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies I cannot
" away with, it is iniquity, even the ſolemn meet-
" ing. Your new moons, and your appointed
" feaſts my ſoul hateth; they are a trouble unto
" me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye
" ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes
" from you: yea, when ye make many prayers,
" I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.
" Waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of
" your doings from hence before mine eyes, ceaſe
" to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, re-
" lieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead
" for the widow. Come now and let us reaſon
" together, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be
" as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though
" they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool."
The ſame ſentiment is alſo admirably expreſſed in
Micah vi. 6. &c. " Wherewith ſhall I come be-
" fore the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high
" God? ſhall I come before him with burnt of-
" ferings, with calves of a year old? Will the
" Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with
" ten thouſands of rivers of oil? ſhall I give my
" firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my
" body

" body for the ſin of my ſoul? He hath ſhewed " thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the " Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to " love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy " God?" To the ſame purpoſe ſee alſo Pſ. l. Jer. vii. 2. Hoſ. vi. 6. and Amos v. 21.

In the New Teſtament, we find John the Baptiſt expoſing the vain confidence of the Jews, on account of their having Abraham for their father, Matt. iii. 9. and our Saviour alſo, when they made the ſame boaſt, in his preſence, ſays, John viii. 39. " If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the " works of Abraham. Ye are of your father the " devil, and the luſts of your father ye will do." Again, ſpeaking of his natural relations, he ſays, Matt. xii. 50. " Whoſoever ſhall do the will of " my father who is heaven, the ſame is my brother, " and ſiſter and mother."

If we conſider the great object and end of all the parts of the ſcheme of revelation, we cannot but ſee that it was intended to promote the practice of moral virtue, in order to men's attaining to the greateſt degrees of perfection and happineſs. The ten commandments, which God ſpake from Sinai, are all of a moral, and moſt of them of a ſocial nature. His earneſt exhortations to the Iſraelites, through the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, enforces the practice of virtue in the ſtrongeſt manner; and ſo do all the writings of the prophets.

The purport of their earneſt exhortations is, "Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well; turn ye, turn "ye, from your evil ways; why will ye die, O "houſe of Iſrael."

Repentance and *works meet for repentance*, was the chief ſubject of John the Baptiſt's preaching, and alſo of that of our Saviour. Our Lord's admirable ſermon on the mount, conſiſts chiefly of precepts of the moſt ſublime moral virtue; and he repreſents the fate of all mankind at the laſt day, as determined by a regard to their moral character only, and eſpecially their benevolence.

Whenever the general deſign of the goſpel is mentioned, it is always ſpoken of as intended to reform and bleſs mankind. Thus the apoſtle Peter, in his addreſs to the Jews, after the effuſion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecoſt, ſays, Acts iii. 26. "God, having raiſed up his Son Jeſus, ſent him "to bleſs you, in turning away every one of you "from his iniquities." To the ſame purpoſe the "apoſtle Paul, Titus ii. 11. "The grace of God "that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all "men; teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and "worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, "and godly in this preſent world; looking for "that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of "the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: "who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem "us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a "peculiar

"peculiar people, zealous of good works." And our Lord himſelf ſays, John xv. viii. "Herein "is my father glorified, that ye bear much "fruit."

Laſtly, it is impoſſible that the practice of univerſal virtue, abſolute or relative, ſhould be more ſtrongly enforced than it is in all the apoſtolical epiſtles, and eſpecially towards the cloſe of them. See Rom. ii. 4. &c. 12. 1 Cor. vi. 9. &c. Eph. i. 4. v. 2. &c. 1 Theſ. v. 22. the epiſtle of James throughout, 1 Pet. 11. 11. &c. 1 John iv. 20.

It is in vain that we look for any thing that can be compared with this in any ſyſtem of heathen religion. Almoſt the beſt that can be ſaid of them is, that they enjoin practices that are merely idle and inſignificant; for too often they countenance the moſt deſtructive vices.

SECTION III.

Of the goodneſs of God.

THE goodneſs of God ſeems to be pretty clearly inferred from a view of the works of creation, a benevolent deſign being ſufficiently manifeſt in every thing that we underſtand. Indeed the great mixture that we ſee of *apparent evil* is apt to ſtag-

ger even well diſpoſed minds, eſpecially when themſelves are affected by it; but in the ſcriptures we ſee all theſe doubts removed. All events are promiſcuouſly aſcribed to God; but his intention is repreſented as being good and kind, even when his proceedings are the moſt ſevere. David, addreſſing himſelf to God, ſays, Pſ. cxix. 68. "Thou art "good, and doeſt good." Pſ. cxlv. 9. "The "Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are "over all his works." Pſ. xxxiii. 5. "The "earth is full of the goodneſs of the Lord." Pſ. cxlv. 15. "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and "thou giveſt them their meat in due ſeaſon. Thou "openeſt thine hand, and ſatisfieſt the deſire of "every living thing.

Our Lord ſays, Matt. xix. 17: "There is none "good but one, that is God;" and in his ſermon upon the mount, he enforces the duty of univerſal benevolence by the conſideration of that of our heavenly father, Matt. v. 45. "That ye may be "the children of your father who is in heaven, "for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on "the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the "unjuſt." The apoſtle John expreſſes himſelf in the moſt emphatical manner concerning this ſubject, when he ſays, 1 John iv. 16. "We have "known and believed the love that God hath to "us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, "dwelleth in God, and God in him." And the apoſtle

apoſtle James ſays, ch. i. 17. "Every good gift, "and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh "down from the father of lights."

The ſeverity with which good men are ſometimes treated, is always repreſented in the ſcriptures as the correction of a tender father, intended to promote the reformation and good of his children; and what he always inflicts with reluctance. Jeremiah ſays, Lam. iii. 31. "The Lord will "not caſt off for ever. But though he cauſe "grief, yet will he have compaſſion, according "to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not "afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." The prophet Hoſea draws a moſt affecting picture of the painful reluctance with which the divine being has recourſe to ſeverity, after the moſt aggravated and repeated provocations, Hoſea xi. 1. &c. "When Iſrael was a child, then I loved "him, and called my ſon out of Egypt.——— "They ſacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incenſe "to graven images. I taught Ephraim alſo to "go, taking them by their arms, but they knew "not that I healed them. I drew them with cords "of a man, with bands of love.———My peo- "ple are bent to backſliding from me: though "they called them to the moſt High, none at "all would exalt him. How ſhall I give thee up, "Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? how "ſhall I make thee as Admah? how ſhall I ſet

" thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within " me, my repentings are kindled together. I will " not execute the fierceneſs of mine anger, I will " not return to deſtroy Ephraim; for I am God, " and not man, the holy One in the midſt of " thee."

The author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, alſo, reminds the perſecuted chriſtians of his age, of theſe conforming ſentiments, ſo peculiarly proper to their circumſtances, Heb. xii. 5. &c. " Ye have " forgotten the exhortation which ſpeaketh unto " you as unto children, my ſon, deſpiſe not thou " the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou " art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth " he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he " receiveth. If ye endure chaſtening, God deal- " with you as with ſons: for what ſon is he whom " the father chaſteneth not?——Now no chaſ- " tening for the preſent ſeemeth to be joyous, but " grievous; nevertheleſs, afterward it yieldeth the " peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs, unto them who " are exerciſed thereby."

Laſtly, the diſpenſation of the goſpel is always repreſented as an inſtance of the exceedingly great love and goodneſs of God, John iii. 16. " God " ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begot- " ten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould " not periſh, but have everlaſting life." 1 John iv. 9. " In this was manifeſted the love of God " towards

" towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only be-
" gotten ſon into the world, that we might live
" through him. Herein is love, not that we loved
" God, but that he loved us." Rom. viii. 32.
" He that ſpared not his own ſon, but delivered
" him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him
" alſo freely give us all things."

SECTION IV.

Of the mercy of God.

THE mercy of God to thoſe who are diſpoſed to return to their duty, when they have once rendered themſelves obnoxious to his diſpleaſure by their offences, is a ſubject of which mankind, eſpecially thoſe whoſe minds were rendered timid and fearful by a conſciouſneſs of guilt, would be more apt to entertain doubts, than of the goodneſs of God in general. No proof by way of *inference* only, how ſhort and plain ſoever, would be ſufficient for ſuch perſons; and yet it is eaſy to ſee, that it is of the utmoſt importance, that ſuch perſons ſhould receive all poſſible ſatisfaction with reſpect to it: leſt, through a diſtruſt of the mercy of God, they ſhould be driven into abſolute deſpair. Beſides, nothing is ſo engaging, and furniſhes ſo powerful a motive to a return to duty, as a

thorough perſuaſion of the clemency of the offended party. On this account, probably, it is, that the declarations of the mercy of God, to the truly penitent, are ſo remarkably full and explicit in the ſcriptures, inſomuch that no doubt can poſſibly remain with reſpect to it.

At the very time of the promulgation of the law of Moſes, which is deemed to be the moſt rigorous of all the divine diſpenſations, when Moſes waited in mount Sinai with the ſecond tables of ſtone, immediately after that moſt aggravated offence of the Iſraelites in making the golden calf, the divine being makes the moſt ſolemn declaration of his mercy imaginable, Ex. xxxiv. 5. &c. "And the "Lord deſcended in the cloud, and ſtood with "him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. "And the Lord paſſed by before him, and pro- "claimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful "and gracious, long ſuffering, and abundant in "goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thou- "ſands, forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſſion, and "ſin."

When Moſes foretels the final diſperſion of the Iſraelites, in conſequence of their idolatry, and other vices, he at the ſame time gives them the moſt ſolemn aſſurances of the divine favour in caſe of their repentance. I ſhall quote two remarkable paſſages for this purpoſe, Deut. iv. 25. &c. "When "thou ſhalt beget children, and children's chil- "dren,

"dren, and ſhalt have remained long in the land,
"and ſhall corrupt yourſelves, and make a graven
"image, or the likeneſs of any thing, and ſhall do
"evil in the ſight of the Lord thy God, to pro-
"voke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to
"witneſs againſt you this day, that ye ſhall ſoon
"utterly periſh from off the land whereunto ye
"go over Jordan to poſſeſs it: ye ſhall not prolong
"your days upon it, but ſhall utterly be deſtroyed.
"And the Lord ſhall ſcatter you among the na-
"tions, and ye ſhall be left few in number among
"the heathen, whither the Lord ſhall lead you.
"And there ye ſhall ſerve gods, the work of men's
"hands, wood and ſtone, which neither ſee, nor
"hear, nor eat, nor ſmell. But if from thence
"thou ſhalt ſeek the Lord thy God, thou ſhalt
"find him, if thou ſeek him with all thy heart
"and with all thy ſoul. When thou art in tribu-
"lation, and all theſe things are come upon thee,
"even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord
"thy God, and ſhalt be obedient unto his voice:
"(for the Lord thy God is a merciful God) he
"will not forſake thee, neither deſtroy thee, nor
"forget the covenant of thy fathers which he
"ſware unto them." Deut. xxx. 1. &c. "And
"it ſhall come to paſs when all theſe things are
"come upon thee, the bleſſing and the curſe,
"which I have ſet before thee, and thou ſhalt call
"them to mind, among all the nations whither the

" Lord thy God hath driven thee, and ſhalt return
" unto the Lord thy God, and ſhalt obey his voice
" according to all that I command thee this day,
" thou and thy children, with all thine heart and
" with all thy ſoul: that then the Lord thy God
" will turn thy captivity, and have compaſſion
" upon thee, and will return and gather thee from
" all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath
" ſcattered thee. If any of thine be driven out
" unto the outmoſt parts of heaven, from thence
" will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from
" thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy
" God will bring thee into the land which thy fa-
" thers poſſeſſed, and thou ſhalt poſſeſs it, and he
" will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy
" fathers."

To theſe promiſes Daniel had recourſe, when he made confeſſion and prayer to God on the behalf of Iſrael, during the Babyloniſh captivity, Dan. ix. 8. &c. " O Lord, to us belongeth con-
" fuſion of face, to our kings, to our princes,
" and to our fathers, becauſe we have ſinned
" againſt thee. To the Lord our God belong
" mercies and forgiveneſs, though we have re-
" belled againſt him." The prophet Jeremiah alſo repeats the ſame promiſes of mercy and reſtoration, with a view to the ſame caſe, Jer. iii. 12. &c. " Go and proclaim theſe words toward the
" north, and ſay, Return, thou backſliding Iſ-
" rael,

" rael, ſaith the Lord, and I will not cauſe mine
" anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, ſaith
" the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.—
" Turn, O backſliding children, ſaith the Lord,
" for I am married unto you: and I will take you
" one of a city, and two of a family, and I will
" bring you to Zion."

The declarations of divine mercy to penitent offenders, upon a great variety of occaſions, in the courſe of the Jewiſh hiſtory, and eſpecially in the book of Pſalms, and of the prophets, who wrote in times of great degeneracy, are remarkably emphatical; and to give us the ſtronger foundation for our confidence in the divine mercy it is always repreſented as ariſing *from himſelf only*, from that love and compaſſion which is eſſential to his nature, and which he bears to all the works of his hands. We cannot ſo much as collect from any of them the moſt diſtant hint of its ariſing from any foreign conſideration whatever; and this was certainly a matter of the greateſt conſequence; ſince a ſuſpicion of this kind would tend to beget an idea of uncertainty, or partiality in the diſtribution of the divine mercy.

Indeed every idea of this nature ſeems to be expreſsly excluded in ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture, as in that declaration which the divine being makes by the prophet Iſaiah, xliii. 22. &c. " Thou haſt
" not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou haſt
" been

" been weary of me, O Iſrael.—Thou haſt made " me to ſerve with thy ſins, thou haſt wearied me " with thine iniquities. I, even I am he that " blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions *for mine own ſake*, " and will not remember thy ſins." David, it is evident, had no other idea when he prayed for the forgiveneſs of his ſins, Pſ. xxv. 6. &c. " Re- " member, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy " loving kindneſſes, for they have been ever of " old. Remember not the ſins of my youth, nor " my tranſgreſſions; according to thy mercy re- " member thou me, *for thy goodneſs ſake*, O Lord. " Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will " he teach ſinners in the way. The meek will he " guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach " his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy " and truth, unto ſuch as keep his covenant, and " his teſtimonies. *For thy name's ſake*, O Lord, " pardon mine iniquity: for it is great."

On this moſt important and agreeable ſubject, I ſhall quote a few more paſſages, Pſ. ciii. 8. &c. " The Lord is merciful and gracious, ſlow to an- " ger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not al- " ways chide: neither will he keep his anger for " ever. He hath not dealt with us after our ſins: " nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. " For as the heaven is high above the earth: ſo " great is his mercy towards them that fear him. " As far as the eaſt is from the weſt: ſo far hath

" he

" he removed our tranſgreſſions from us. Like as " a father pitieth his children: ſo the Lord pitieth " them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame: " he remembereth that we are duſt." Pſ. lxxxvi. 5. " For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to for- " give." Iſ. lv. 6. &c. " Seek ye the Lord while " he may be found, call ye upon him while he is " near. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the " unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him re- " turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy " upon him, and to our God, for he will abun- " dantly pardon." Ez. xxxiii. 11. " As I live, " ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the " death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn " from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from " your evil ways; for why will ye die, O houſe " of Iſrael?" v. 14. &c. " When I ſay unto " the wicked, Thou ſhalt ſurely die: if he turn " from his ſin, and do that which is lawful and " right; if the wicked reſtore the pledge, give " again that he had robbed, walk in the ſtatutes " of life without committing iniquity; he ſhall " ſurely live, he ſhall not die. None of his ſins " that he hath committed ſhall be mentioned unto " him: he hath done that which is lawful and " right, he ſhall ſurely live." Ez. xviii. 31. &c. " Caſt away from you all your tranſgreſſions, " whereby ye have tranſgreſſed, and make you a " new heart, and a new ſpirit; for why will ye " die,

" die, O houſe of Iſrael? For I have no pleaſure " in the death of him that dieth, ſaith the Lord " God: wherefore turn yourſelves, and live ye."

Theſe paſſages certainly expreſs more than a *willingneſs*, they diſcover a moſt *earneſt deſire* in the divine being, that ſinners ſhould repent and be happy. I ſhall therefore cloſe theſe quotations with only one more from Micah vii. 18. &c. " Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth " iniquity, and paſſeth by the tranſgreſſion of the " remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his " anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy. " He will turn again, he will have compaſſion " upon us: he will ſubdue our iniquities: and " thou wilt caſt all their ſins into the depth of the " ſea."

The mercy of God appears not only in ſuch full *declarations* as theſe, but likewiſe in the hiſtory of his *conduct*, as recorded in the Old Teſtament. As often as the Iſraelites repented, after ſuffering for their frequent apoſtacies, ſo often did they find mercy. This was the caſe, in a remarkable manner, with king Manaſſeh, and alſo with Ahab; nor was this grace confined to the Iſraelites. The inhabitants of Nineveh obtained the ſame favour on the ſame equitable terms; for upon Jonah's proclamation, that within forty days Nineveh ſhould be deſtroyed, we read, Jonah iii. 5. &c. that " the people of Nineveh believed God, and pro-

" claimed

"claimed a faſt, and put on ſack-cloth, from the "greateſt of them even to the leaſt of them; and "that the king of Nineveh aroſe from his throne, "and laid his robe from him, and covered him "with ſack-cloth, and ſat in aſhes. And he "cauſed it to be proclaimed, and publiſhed "through Nineveh, (by the decree of the king "and his nobles) ſaying, Let neither man nor beaſt, "herd nor flock, taſte any thing; let them not "feed, nor drink water. But let man and beaſt "be covered with ſack-cloth, and cry mightily "unto God: yea, let them turn every one from "his evil way, and from the violence that is in "his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and "repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, "that we periſh not? And God ſaw their works, "that they turned from their evil way, and God "repented of the evil that he had ſaid that he would "do unto them, and he did it not." Jonah himſelf was diſpleaſed that his prediction was not literally fulfilled; but the acknowledgement which he makes why he was unwilling to undertake the commiſſion, is much to our preſent purpoſe, ch. iv. 1. &c. "But it diſpleaſed Jonah exceedingly, and "he was very angry. And he prayed unto the "Lord, and ſaid, I pray thee, O Lord, was not "this my ſaying, when I was yet in my country? "Therefore I fled before unto Tarſhiſh: for I "knew that thou art a gracious God, and merci-

"ful,

" ful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and " repenteſt thee of the evil."

The above-mentioned declarations of mercy to the penitent, were delivered under the Jewiſh diſpenſation; and no perſon will imagine that they were reſtricted under the goſpel. John the Baptiſt, the fore-runner of our Lord, our Lord himſelf, and alſo his apoſtles, all opened their reſpective commiſſions with the doctrine of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins, Matt. iii. 1. " In thoſe days " came John the Baptiſt, preaching in the wilder- " neſs of Judea, and ſaying, Repent ye: for the " kingdom of heaven is at hand: and v. 8. " Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Ch. iv. 17. " From that time Jeſus began to " preach, and to ſay, Repent, for the kingdom of " heaven is at hand." It is not poſſible to give a more ſtriking or more beautiful illuſtration of the propitious nature of the divine being, than our Lord has done in the parable of the prodigal ſon, in which we are informed, Luke xv. 17. that as ſoon as this profligate youth came to himſelf, and to a reſolution to return to his father, and to ſay, " Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and " before thee, and am no more worthy to be called " thy ſon; that, when he was yet a great way off, " his father ſaw him, and had compaſſion, and " ran, and fell on his neck, and kiſſed him." The Lord's prayer, and the illuſtration of it by

our

our Lord himſelf, Matt. vi. 14. aſſures us, that if we forgive men their treſpaſſes, our heavenly father will alſo forgive us. The ſame doctrine is repeated and enforced by him in his parable of the king who took an account of his ſervants, one of whom owed him ten thouſand talents. Matt. xviii. 23.

The apoſtle Peter, at the cloſe of his firſt ſpeech, to a great multitude of Jews, who were aſſembled on the report of the firſt great miracle that was wrought after the aſcenſion of our Lord, viz. the effuſion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecoſt, ſays, Acts ii. 38. "Repent, and be bap-"tized every one of you, in the name of Jeſus "Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins." The ſame apoſtle, ſpeaking of the divine being, ſays, 2 Pet. iii. 9. "God is not willing that any ſhould "periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance;" and to quote no more, the apoſtle John ſays, 1 John i. 8. &c. "If we ſay that we have no ſin, "we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us. "If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to "forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all "unrighteouſneſs."

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SECTION V.

Of the divine veracity.

THE laſt of the moral attributes of the divine being, of which I ſhall take particular notice, is his *veracity*, or regard to truth, and his fidelity with reſpect to his promiſes and engagements. Of this we can have no direct knowledge from the light of nature, though we infer from it that we ſhould have reaſon to depend upon the truth of all the declarations of the divine being, if he ſhould think proper to make any; but in the ſcriptures we find both the moſt expreſs declarations concerning the veracity and faithfulneſs of God, and likewiſe a ſufficient number of facts correſponding to thoſe declarations.

In Iſ. lxv. 16. he is called *the God of truth.* It is ſaid of him, Pſ. cxlvi. 6. "he keepeth truth for "ever;" and he himſelf ſays, Pſ. lxxxix. 34. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the "thing that is gone out of my lips:" and Iſ. xlvi. 11. "I have ſpoken it, I will alſo bring it to paſs; "I have purpoſed it, I will alſo do it." Laſtly, we read, Heb. vi. 18. "It is impoſſible for God "to lie."

With

With reſpect to *facts*, it is ſufficient to ſay, that no inſtance is mentioned of the divine being having failed to fulfil any promiſe that he had made, reſpecting either individuals, or nations of mankind; but a great variety of facts are recorded, in which the performance exactly correſponds to the engagement. I ſhall recite only one of them. After the children of Iſrael were ſettled in the land of Canaan, it is ſaid, Joſh. xxi. 43. "and "the Lord gave unto Iſrael all the land which he "ſware to give unto their fathers: and they poſ-"ſeſſed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord "gave them reſt round about, according to all "that he ſware unto their fathers: and there ſtood "not a man of all their enemies before them: the "Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. "There failed not ought of any thing good which "the Lord had ſpoken unto the houſe of Iſrael: "all came to paſs."

On ſuch ground as this (the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions having been proved to be divine) we have ſufficient reaſon to depend upon the truth of thoſe divine declarations, the time for the accompliſhment of which is not yet come; eſpecially with reſpect to the grand cataſtrophe of the whole ſcheme, viz. that there ſhall be a reſurrection of all the dead, followed by an ample reward for the righteous, and an adequate puniſhment for the wicked.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

OF THE DUTY WHICH GOD REQUIRES OF MAN.

THE unity, and the moral attributes of God being ſo clearly revealed to us in the ſcriptures, we naturally expect that the chief thing which he will require of man will be purity of heart and integrity of life, or the genuine principles, the uniform practice, and the confirmed habits of all moral virtue; comprehending an unfeigned reverence and love of himſelf, the higheſt reſpect for his authority, and a humble and chearful ſubmiſſion to all the diſpenſations of his providence, together with all the natural expreſſions of our dependence upon him, and obligation to him. We might alſo expect that he would require of us a ſincere regard to the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and all thoſe actions which naturally ariſe from that generous principle, viz. all the duties of juſtice, equity, and humanity. Laſtly, we might expect that his authority ſhould be interpoſed in favour of thoſe virtues which more immediately reſpect ourſelves, and the government of our appetites and paſſions; ſo that in all things we be chaſte and temperate

temperate, no ſlaves to violent and unreaſonable paſſions, or to any affection of mind by which we might debaſe our natures, or expoſe ourſelves to the temptation of diſturbing and injuring others.

SECTION I.

Of the duty of man with reſpect to God.

THE duties of piety, or devotion, conſiſting of a right diſpoſition of mind with reſpect to God, and the actions which flow from that diſpoſition, are, in a manner, peculiar to the Jewiſh and chriſtian religions; being almoſt unknown to the Gentile world. But in the ſcriptures very great ſtreſs is deſervedly laid upon them.

In general the fear and love of God, and an habitual regard to his inſpection, authority, and example, are repreſented in the ſcriptures as the moſt effectual guard, and the moſt powerful and animating principle of virtue; and every branch of virtue is conſtantly ſpoken of as his expreſs command, and as an obſervance of the laws which he has thought proper to preſcribe as the rule of our conduct. Sentiments of this kind are expreſſed with an infinite diverſity of manner through the whole of the Old and New Teſtament; ſo that the difference,

ference, in this reſpect, between the books of ſcripture and the beſt moral pieces of the heathen writers is exceedingly ſtriking.

When Joſeph was tempted to commit adultery in the moſt private manner, he replied, Gen. xxxix. 9. "How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin "againſt God?" Solomon alſo ſays, Prov. ix. 10. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſ- "dom." and Prov. xvi. 6. "By the fear of the "Lord, men depart from evil." We are exhorted to be "holy, becauſe God is holy," Lev. xix. 2. 1 Pet. i. 16; to "be perfect, even as our fa- "ther who is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v. 48. and alſo to, "be followers of God as dear chil- "dren," Eph. v. 1. And, for this reaſon, to "be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving "one another, even as God in Chriſt hath forgiven "us." Ch. iv. 32.

On the other hand, it is mentioned as characteriſtic of the wicked, that "there is no fear of "God before his eyes." Pſ. xxxvi. 1. and "that God is not in all his thoughts." Pſ. x. 4.

The diſpoſition of mind which we are required to cultivate, with reſpect to God, is repreſented in the ſcriptures as a mixture of filial reverence, love, and confidence, as to a moſt affectionate father, and equitable moral governor; and has in it nothing of that terror and anxiety, which is inſpired by a ſubjection to a cruel or capricious being. On this

account we are ſometimes commanded to
:rve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with
embling." Pſ. ii. 11. and at other times to
:rve him with gladneſs," Pſ. c. 2. Upon the
le, it means a perfect attachment of ſoul to this
teſt and beſt of beings, ſo as to have no will
his, and to reſpect no intereſt or authority
tever in compariſon with his.

)ur Lord, quoting from the law of Moſes, ſays,
" the firſt and greateſt commandment is,
Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy
eart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy
iind, Matt. xxii. 37; and we are exhorted by
, Luke xii. 4. " Be not afraid of them that
ill the body, and after that, have no more that
ıey can do. But I will forewarn you whom you
hall fear: fear him, who after he hath killed,
ath power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto
ou, fear him." Upon this principle, the apoſtles
:r and John ſay, with confidence, to the chief
ſts and rulers of the Jews, Acts iv. 19.
Whether it be right in the ſight of God to
ıearken unto you, more than unto God, judge
:e."

This habitual regard to God, and entire con-
ıce in him, is alſo repreſented as the beſt ſup-
: of the mind under all the difficulties and trials
life. David ſays, Pſ. xvi. 8. " I have ſet
ıe Lord always before me: becauſe he is at my

" right hand, I ſhall not be moved." The prophet Iſaiah, exciting to confidence in God, ſays, ch. xxvi. 3. " Thou wilt keep him in perfect " peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee." Solomon alſo gives this excellent advice, Prov. iii. 5. &c. " Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart; and " lean not unto thine own underſtanding. In all " thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct " thy paths:" and the apoſtle Peter encourages chriſtians, in time of trial, to " caſt their care " upon God, who careth for them." 1 Pet. v. 7.

From a firm perſuaſion that every thing is under the direction of a wiſe and good providence, we find in the ſcriptures, ſuch expreſſions of hope, joy, and even exultation, in the moſt calamitous and trying ſcenes, as heathens could have no idea of; becauſe they had no principles from which ſuch ſentiments and language could poſſibly flow. The calm acquieſcence of Job under a moſt afflictive diſpenſation of divine providence, has been mentioned already. When Eli heard a meſſage from God by Samuel, the import of which was the greateſt calamity that could befal his family, he replied, 1 Sam. iii. 18. " It is the Lord: let him " do what ſeemeth him good." The prophet Habakkuk gives us a moſt admirable deſcription, not merely of the acquieſcence, but of the chearfulneſs with which afflictive providences ſhould be borne, ch. iii. 17. " Although the fig-tree ſhall not " bloſſom,

"blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the "labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall "yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from "fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the "God of my salvation." David gives the general ground of this satisfaction and confidence in the most obscure scenes of providence, when he says, Ps. xcvii. 1. &c. "The Lord reigneth, let the "earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad "thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about "him: righteousness and judgment are the habi-"tation of his throne."

On the foundation of this firm persuasion of the favour of God to the righteous, and the certainty of the reward which he reserves for them, our Lord encourages his followers to the most chearful bearing of persecution for conscience sake, Matt. v. 10. &c. "Blessed are they who are persecuted "for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom "of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile "you, and persecute you, and shall say all "manner of evil against you, falsely, for my "sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for "great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted "they the prophets who were before you." Our Lord took the most effectual method to inculcate an entire submission to the will of God, by direct-

ing it to be the ſubject of our daily prayers, Matt. vi. 10. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in "heaven;" and he exhibited an example of this entire ſubmiſſion in a ſcene of the greateſt diſtreſs to which it is probable that human nature was ever ſubjected, I mean in his agony in the garden, when "his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even "unto death;" when yet he prayed, ſaying, Matt. xxvi. 39. "O my father, if it be poſſible, let "this cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs, not as I "will, but as thou wilt." And again, in his ſecond prayer on that occaſion, v. 42. "O my "Father, if this cup may not paſs away from me, "except I drink it, thy will be done." Laſtly, the apoſtle James makes uſe of exhortations exactly ſimilar to thoſe of our Saviour in the caſe of perſecution, James i. 2. 12. "My brethren, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he ſhall receive the "crown of life, which the Lord hath promiſed to "them that love him." And the apoſtle Peter, on the ſame occaſion, ſays, 1 Pet. iii. 14. "If ye "ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye: "and be not afraid of their terror, neither be "troubled."

The propriety of *praying* to God is far from being ſatisfactorily proved from the light of nature, and much leſs can the obligation of it as a moral duty, be

be ſtrictly demonſtrated upon thoſe principles. Had the practice appeared ever ſo deſirable, the humble and the diffident might have thought it too preſumptuous, as much as others would have thought it unneceſſary. It is, therefore, with peculiar ſatisfaction, that, in the ſcriptures, we find all the indigent and dependent race of mankind encouraged in the freeſt and moſt conſtant acceſs to God by prayer. And notwithſtanding the infinite diſtance that ſubſiſts between the divine being as our creator, and us as his creatures, in the whole of the ſcripture hiſtory, he appears in the condeſcending and amiable character of our *Father*, as ready to attend to our wants, as he is able to ſupply them; being to us, in reality, what our occaſions require him to be; inſomuch, that though he is repreſented as knowing every thing that we can tell him, even the thoughts of our hearts; yet, becauſe our nature is ſuch, that we cannot keep up that conſtant regard to him, in the whole of our conduct, which our own improvement and happineſs require, without a free and familiar intercourſe with him, ſuch as we maintain with our earthly governors and parents (our attachment to whom is greatly ſtrengthened, by the genuine and natural expreſſions of it) he has been pleaſed not only to permit, but abſolutely to require that intercourſe; expecting that we ſhould both make acknowledgments to him

for favours already received, and alſo apply to him for thoſe which we ſtill want; not forgetting, however, to expreſs the moſt entire acquieſcence in his will, whether he ſhould think proper to grant our requeſts or not. Now, this is certainly the very part that a prudent and wiſe parent would take with a child, though with reſpect to himſelf, both the acknowledgments and the requeſts of the child were ever ſo unneceſſary.

In the Old Teſtament hiſtory, we find prayer to be the conſtant practice of all good men; and ſo far was there from being any doubt concerning the propriety of it, that it is mentioned by Eliphaz as the greateſt aggravation of the wickedneſs which he aſcribed to Job, that he even "caſt off fear, "and reſtrained prayer before God," Job. xv. 4. It is mentioned as the characteriſtic of God, that "he heareth prayer," Pſ. lxv. 2. "O thou that "heareſt prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come." Solomon alſo ſays, Prov. xv. 8. "That the "prayer of the upright is his delight;" and David, Pſ. cxlv. 18. "The Lord is nigh unto all "them that call upon him. He will alſo hear their "cry, and will ſave them."

Our Saviour recommends frequent prayer to his diſciples. He alſo gave them a variety of particular inſtructions, and was himſelf a pattern for them, with reſpect to it. For we not only read of his praying

praying upon particular occaſions (ſeveral of which prayers are recorded by the Evangeliſts) but it is ſaid, upon one occaſion, that he ſpent even a whole night in prayer to God, Luke vi. 12. as if he who received the moſt from God, and who was therefore the moſt dependent upon him, thought it neceſſary to be more particularly careful to expreſs that dependence. Our Lord even encourages great earneſtneſs and importunity in prayer; one of his parables being particularly calculated to excite men "always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. &c. "What man is there of you," ſays he, addreſſing himſelf to a great multitude, Matt. vii. 9. &c. "whom, if his ſon aſk bread, will he "give him a ſtone? Or if he aſk a fiſh, will he "give him a ſerpent? If ye then, being evil, "know how to give good gifts unto your chil-"dren, how much more ſhall your father who is "in heaven give good things to them that aſk "him?"

Our Lord is very careful, however, to inculcate a right diſpoſition of mind in prayer, and particularly cautions his diſciples to avoid the oſtentation of the Phariſees, and the clamorous repetitions of the heathens upon that occaſion, Matt. vi. 5. &c. "When thou prayeſt, thou ſhalt not be as the "hypocrites are: for they love to pray ſtanding in "the ſynagogues, and in the corners of the ſtreets, "that they may be ſeen of men. Verily, I ſay "unto you, they have their reward. But thou,

" when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and " when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy fa- " ther who is in ſecret, and thy father who " ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly. But " when ye pray, uſe not vain repetitions, as the " heathen do: for they think that they ſhall be " heard for their much ſpeaking. Be not ye, " therefore, like unto them: for your father know- " eth what things ye have need of, before ye aſk " him." To theſe excellent admonitions, he ſubjoins that pattern of prayer which we uſually call the *Lord's prayer*, which is admirably ſimple and expreſſive; and as the moſt important of all our petitions is that which we make for the forgiveneſs of our ſins, he is particularly careful to inſiſt upon it, that we make that requeſt with a heart thoroughly reconciled to all thoſe who have offended us. Matt. vi. 14. &c. " For, if ye forgive men their " treſpaſſes, your heavenly father will alſo forgive " you. But if ye forgive not men their treſ- " paſſes, neither will your father forgive your " treſpaſſes."

The apoſtles alſo, upon a great variety of occaſions, moſt earneſtly recommend frequent prayer, 1 Theſ. v. 17. " Pray without ceaſing." Rom. xii. 12. " Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribu- " lation; continuing inſtant in prayer." Philip. iv. 6. " Be careful for nothing: but in every " thing, by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſ- " giving,

" giving, let your requeſts be made known unto " God." 1 Tim. ii. 1. &c. " I exhort that " ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving " of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and " for all that are in authority." This apoſtle does not fail, however, to recommend a proper temper of mind in prayer, when he adds, v. 8. " I will " that men pray every where, lifting up holy " hands, without wrath and doubting."

When perſons are under affliction, they are more eſpecially diſpoſed to have recourſe to prayer. Seeing no other hope, they fly to God, as their all-ſufficient Saviour, and friend; and this natural propenſity of the mind is particularly encouraged by the apoſtle James, v. 13. " Is any among you " afflicted? let him pray."

Though the greateſt ſtreſs is laid, in the ſcriptures, upon *private* devotion, it is by no means ſo much ſo, as to ſet aſide the obligation of *ſocial worſhip*, which is alſo much inſiſted upon in them. The ſacrifices which were appointed to be made every morning and evening in the Jewiſh tabernacle or temple, were offered in the name of the whole nation; and as many perſons as conveniently could, did uſually attend during the ceremony, and offered up their prayers, while the prieſt went into the temple to burn incenſe. Luke i. 10. " And the " whole multitude of the people were praying with- " out at the time of incenſe." David expreſſes

the higheſt ſatisfaction which he received from thoſe opportunities of public worſhip in ſeveral of his pſalms, as Pſ. xxvi. 8. "Lord, I have loved "the habitation of thy houſe, and the place where "thine honour dwelleth." Pſ. cxxii. 1. "I "was glad when they ſaid unto me, Let us go "into the houſe of the Lord." And Pſ. lxxxiv. 1. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of "hoſts! A day in thy courts is better than a "thouſand." He alſo recommends the greateſt reverence upon theſe occaſions. Pſ. lxxxix. 7. "God is greatly to be feared in the aſſembly of the "ſaints: and to be had in reverence of all them "that are about him."

Though we have no particular accounts of the cuſtom of the Jews, in antient times, with reſpect to the manner in which they ſpent their ſabbaths, yet ſince they were commanded to reſt from all labour on thoſe days, and were enjoined to read and meditate on their law "at all times," Deut. vi. 7. we cannot but ſuppoſe that they employed thoſe days, in which they had moſt leiſure for that purpoſe, in reading, meditation, and prayer; and ſeveral paſſages in the Old Teſtament ſeem pretty plainly to allude to ſuch a cuſtom. We find, however, in the time of our Saviour, that *ſynagogues* were eſtabliſhed through the whole country of Judea, and in all other countries where the Jews had any ſettlement; and in theſe places the books of the

the law and the prophets were regularly read, and prayers made every ſabbath day. Theſe ſervices our Lord himſelf ſtatedly attended, as Luke informs us, ch. iv. 16. "As his cuſtom was, he "went into the ſynagogue on the ſabbath-day." And the ſame exerciſes were continued by the apoſtles in all chriſtian churches, which were formed upon the ſame general plan, and have been tranſmitted through all ages to this day.

SECTION II.

Of the ſocial duties.

IT would be tedious, and is by no means neceſſary to go over all the articles of *ſocial duty*, as they are explained and enforced in the ſcriptures. Whatever I have obſerved in the firſt part of theſe Inſtitutes, as the dictate of Nature, is ſtrongly inculcated in the books of the Old and New Teſtament, and recommended by motives and conſiderations peculiar to revelation. I muſt not omit, however, to obſerve that the prophets in the Old Teſtament, and our Saviour, and the apoſtles in the New, do not content themſelves with giving inſtructions, concerning men's conduct in particular caſes and inſtances, but are more eſpecially careful to inculcate the neceſſity of cultivating ſuch an *inward*

temper of mind as will form a complete *character*, which will lead to the obſervance of every particular duty, and make the conſtant practice of it eaſy and delightful.

They more eſpecially recommend the univerſal principle of *brotherly love*, and a conſtant attention to the intereſts of others. The ſecond great commandment of the law, our Saviour ſays, is, "Thou "ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf;" and in this, as the apoſtle Paul obſerves, the whole of the moral law, as far as it relates to ſociety, is comprehended. Rom. xiii. 8. &c. "Owe no man any "thing, but to love one another: for he that "loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, "Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, Thou ſhalt "not kill, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not "bear falſe witneſs, Thou ſhalt not covet; and "if there be any other commandment, it is briefly "comprehended in this ſaying, namely, Thou "ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. Love work-"eth no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the "fulfilling of the law."

Our Lord and the apoſtles, beſides this general good-will to all men, ſtrongly recommend a more affectionate concern for our fellow-chriſtians, thoſe who have the ſame faith, and the ſame hope with ourſelves, John xv. 12. "This is my command-"ment, That ye love one another, as I have lov-"ed you." And xiii. 35. "By this ſhall all men

"know

"know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love "one to another." Accordingly the apoſtle Peter exhorts, 1 Peter i. 22. "See that ye love one "another with a pure heart fervently." The apoſtle John, more than any other, recommends this divine principle of brotherly love, and ſhews that it is impoſſible to love God without it. 1 John iv. 20. "This commandment have we from him, "that he who loveth God, love his brother alſo." v. 11. "Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought "alſo to love one another. No man hath ſeen "God at any time. If we love one another, God "dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. v. 16. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in "God, and God in him." v. 20. "If a man "ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is "a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom "he hath ſeen, how can he love God, whom he "hath not ſeen?"

Our Lord is particularly careful to warn his diſciples, that they do not confine their attention to outward actions, but to conſider the *inward temper of their mind*, with reſpect to every branch of ſocial duty; and he cenſures the narrowneſs of the Phariſaical morality for its deficiency in this reſpect, upon ſeveral occaſions, and eſpecially in his ſermon upon the mount. Matt. v. 21. "Ye have "heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, "Thou ſhalt not kill; and whoſoever ſhall kill,

"ſhall

" ſhall be in danger of the judgment: But I ſay " unto you, That whoſoever is angry with his " brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of " the judgment:" ver. 27. " Ye have heard that " it was ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not " commit adultery: But I ſay unto you, That " whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, " hath committed adultery with her already in his " heart."

Very proper attention was alſo given to the temper of mind, and inclination of the heart, in the Old Teſtament; an inſtance of which we have in the tenth commandment. Ex. xx. 17. " Thou " ſhalt not covet thy neighbour's houſe, thou ſhalt " not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-" ſervant, nor his maid-ſervant, nor his ox, nor " his aſs, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

Far from confining our good-will and kind offices to our particular friends and fellow-chriſtians, our Lord ſtrongly recommends good-will and kindneſs to all perſons, and even to enemies: Matt. v. 43. &c. " Ye have heard that it hath " been ſaid, Thou ſhalt love they neighbour and " hate thine enemy; but I ſay unto you, Love " your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do " good to them that hate you, and pray for them " who deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you; " That ye may be the children of your Father " who is in heaven: for he maketh his ſun to riſe

" on

"on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain "on the juſt and on the unjuſt. For if ye love "them that love you, what reward have ye? do "not even the publicans the ſame? Be ye there- "fore perfect, even as your Father who is in hea- "ven is perfect." The apoſtle Paul alſo enjoins us, Rom. xii. 17. &c. "to recompenſe to no man "evil for evil, *and* not to be overcome of evil, but "to overcome evil with good."

The *forgiveneſs of injuries*, about which the heathen moraliſts had, as we have ſeen, great doubts, and which ſome of them abſolutely denied to be a duty; but which is certainly a moſt amiable and valuable one, is ſtrongly recommended by our Lord and his apoſtles. Luke xvii. 3. &c. "If thy "brother treſpaſs againſt thee, rebuke him; and "if he repent, forgive him. And if he treſpaſs "againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven "times in a day turn again to thee, ſaying, I re- "pent; thou ſhalt forgive him." He alſo particularly inforces this advice by the conſideration of the divine mercy and clemency. Mat. vi. 14. "If "ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly "Father will alſo forgive you: But if ye forgive "not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Fa- "ther forgive your treſpaſſes." Luke vi. 36. "Be "ye therefore merciful, as your Father alſo is "merciful." To the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle Paul, Eph. iv. 31. "Let all bitterneſs, and

"wrath

" wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeak-
" ing be put away from you, with all malice:
" And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted,
" forgiving one another, even as God in Chriſt
" hath forgiven you." See alſo Col. iii. 12, 13.

As a moſt important branch of chriſtian duty, and a proof of the moſt ſincere brotherly love, we are frequently exhorted, in the ſcriptures, to conſult one another's improvement in virtue and goodneſs: Rom. xiv. 19. " Let us therefore follow
" after the things which make for peace, and
" things wherewith one may edify another:" Heb. x. 24. " Let us conſider one another to provoke
" unto love, and to good works."

It being our Lord's chief object to inſpire juſt diſpoſitions of mind, and right principles of action, which ſhall ſuperſede all nice diſtinctions about particular rules of conduct, by leading us to *feel* properly upon every occaſion, he gives us this one rule, which, in fact, comprehends all the duties of ſocial life: Matt. vii. 12. " Whatſoever
" ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even
" ſo to them: for this is the law and the pro-
" phets." An important example to this rule he alſo gives us with reſpect to candour in judging of one another. Matt. vii. 1. " Judge not, that ye be
" not judged. For with what judgment ye judge,
" ye ſhall be judged: and with what meaſure ye
" mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again."

It

It is not neceſſary to recite the precepts of ſcripture which relate to the univerſally acknowledged duties of *juſtice* or *equity*, which are very full and explicit; but I ſhall obſerve, that the obligation of *compaſſion* and *charity*, which is variable in itſelf, and which might be diſputed and evaded by ſubtle cavillers, is frequently inſiſted upon both in the Old and New Teſtament. Some of the paſſages in which this duty is inculcated, are peculiarly affecting. Deut. xv. 7. "If there be among you "a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any "of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy "God giveth thee, thou ſhalt not harden thy "heart, nor ſhut thine hand from thy poor bro-"ther: But thou ſhalt open thine hand wide unto "him, and ſhalt ſurely lend him ſufficient for his "need, in that which he wanteth." Lev. xix. 9. "And when ye reap the harveſt of your land, thou "ſhalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, "neither ſhalt thou gather the gleanings of thy "harveſt. And thou ſhalt not glean thy vine-"yard, neither ſhalt thou gather every grape of "thy vineyard; thou ſhalt leave them for the poor "and ſtranger: I am the Lord your God." Iſa. lviii. 6. &c. "Is not this the faſt that I have "choſen——to undo the heavy burdens, and to "let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every "yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, "and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out

"to

" to thy houſe: when thou ſeeſt the naked, that " thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyſelf " from thine own fleſh? Then ſhall thy light " break forth as the morning, &c." Pſ. xli. 1. " Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the poor: the Lord " will deliver him in time of trouble."

Our Saviour is far from being forgetful of a duty, which has ſo near a relation to that affectionate ſympathy and brotherly love, which enters ſo much into the ſpirit of his goſpel. Upon occaſion of the rich making feaſts for the entertainment of others, as rich as themſelves, he ſays, Luke xiv. 13. " When thou makeſt a feaſt, call " the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; And " thou ſhalt be bleſſed; for they cannot recom- " penſe thee: for thou ſhalt be recompenſed at " the reſurrection of the juſt." The apoſtle James, whoſe whole epiſtle is a recommendation of good works, does not omit this duty: James ii. 15. " If a brother or ſiſter be naked, and deſtitute of " daily food: And one of you ſay unto them, De- " part in peace, be ye warmed, and filled; not- " withſtanding ye give them not thoſe things " which are needful to the body: what doth it " profit?" And the apoſtle John, whoſe temper ſeems to have been peculiarly benevolent, ſays, 1 John iii. 17. " Whoſo hath this world's good, and " ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his " bowels

" bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth " the love of God in him?"

The obligation of *veracity* ſeems to have been but weak in the heathen world, and therefore the apoſtles are careful to caution their chriſtian converts very particularly on this head. Eph. iv. 25. " Wherefore, putting away lying, ſpeak every " man truth with his neighbour: for we are mem- " bers one of another:" ch. iv. 15. " Speaking " the truth in love." Col. iii. 9. " Lie not one " to another, ſeeing that ye have put off the old " man with his deeds."

Laſtly, the moſt explicit rules are laid down for our conduct, with reſpect to the various *relative duties of life*, as thoſe of huſband and wife, parent and child, maſter and ſervant, magiſtrate and ſubject, miniſter and people; recommending, in general, to ſuperiors, a regard to equity, and an affectionate attention to the intereſt of thoſe who are under their power; and to inferiors, a reaſonable ſubmiſſion, and a faithful attachment to thoſe to whom they are ſubject; but a detail of all the particulars is not neceſſary in this place. See 1 Pet. ii. 13. to the end, iii. 1—7. Eph. v. 22. to the end, vi. 1—9. Col. iii. 18. to the end, vi. 1. &c.

SEC-

SECTION III.

Of the duties which reſpect ourſelves.

WHEREAS very little account was made by the heathens of the duties of temperance and chaſtity, and in general of thoſe duties which reſpect a man's government of himſelf, in caſes where others are not immediately concerned, we find that theſe duties make a conſiderable figure in the ſyſtem of the revealed will of God, and that the utmoſt *purity of heart*, as well as life and converſation, is required of us in theſe reſpects. More eſpecially, as the gentile converts had not been uſed to put any reſtraint upon their private paſſions, from a principle of conſcience, the apoſtles, in writing to them, are particularly careful to enforce a regard to theſe virtues.

"Bleſſed," ſays our Saviour, Matt. v. 8. "are "the pure in heart: for they ſhall ſee God." The apoſtle Paul cautions Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 22. "to flee youthful luſts, *and* to keep himſelf "pure." 1 Tim. v. 22. To the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle Peter, 1ſt ep. ii. 11. "Dearly beloved, "I beſeech you, as ſtrangers and pilgrims, abſtain "from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul." And Paul to the Epheſians, ch. v. 3. "Fornica-

"tion,

"tion, and all uncleanneſs, or covetouſneſs, let "it not be once named amongſt you, as becometh "ſaints: neither filthineſs, nor fooliſh talking, nor "jeſting, which are not convenient." And laſtly, he gives the Corinthians a moſt ſolemn warning, concerning the extreme danger of an addictedneſs to theſe, as well as other vices. 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor "idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor "abuſers of themſelves with mankind,—nor co-"vetous, nor drunkards—ſhall inherit the king-"dom of God." And, whatever ſome modern libertines may plead in favour of what they call *gallantry*, the apoſtle peremptorily ſays, Heb. xiii. 4. that "Whoremongers and adulterers, God will "judge." Nor is this doctrine, as ſome have pretended, peculiar to the apoſtles, as if they had made the doctrines of the goſpel more rigorous than their maſter; for our Lord himſelf enumerates *fornication* along with *murders*, *adulteries*, *theſts*, *falſe witneſs*, and *blaſphemies*, which come from the heart, and defile the man, Matt. xv. 19.

Every other irregularity of paſſion, beſides the irregular indulgence of the bodily appetites, is alſo expreſsly forbidden in the ſcriptures, and a variety of virtues, diſpoſitions, and habits, which have their ſeat more properly in the *mind*, are ſtrongly inculcated upon us, as *humility*, *meekneſs*, *contentment* and *diligence*.

Admo-

Admonitions reſpecting *pride*, or too high an opinion of ourſelves, and the conſequence of it, arrogance with reſpect to others, are very frequent both in the Old and New Teſtament. To aſſiſt us to repreſs this improper diſpoſition of mind, which is the ſource of ſo much uneaſineſs, both to ourſelves and others, we are more eſpecially reminded, that every advantage of which we can be poſſeſſed, and which can be the foundation of pride, as birth, riches, power, knowledge, &c. is the gift of God, and therefore ſhould be enjoyed with gratitude, humility, and uſefulneſs.

Moſes admoniſhes the Iſraelites on this ſubject. Deut. viii. 12. &c. "When thou haſt eaten and "art full, and haſt built goodly houſes, and dwelt "therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks "multiply, and thy ſilver and thy gold is multi-"plied, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy "God, and thy heart be lifted up; and thou ſay "in thine heart, My power, and the might of my "hand hath gotten me this wealth."

Our Saviour took every opportunity of inculcating this uſeful leſſon on his diſciples. He began his ſermon on the mount with pronouncing a bleſſing upon the "poor in ſpirit." Matt. v. 2. He frequently reproved the pride of the Scribes and Phariſees. Matt. xxiii. 2—6. and recommended humility and moderation to his apoſtles, upon ſeveral occaſions, and more eſpecially when they diſputed

puted among themſelves who ſhould be the greateſt in his kingdom; and he ſets before them his own example in this reſpect. Matt. xi. 29. "Learn "of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and "ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls."

The apoſtles give many excellent advices on this ſubject, as Rom. xii. 3. "I ſay, through the "grace given unto me, to every man that is "among you, not to think of himſelf more high- "ly than he ought to think; but to think ſoberly, "according as God hath dealt to every man the "meaſure of faith." The ſame apoſtle argues this matter more particularly in 1 Cor. iv. 6. &c. "That no one of you be puffed up one againſt "another. For who maketh thee to differ from "another? and what haſt thou that thou didſt "not receive? now if thou didſt receive it, why "doſt thou glory as if thou hadſt not received it?" He repeats the ſame exhortation, 1 Tim. vi. 17. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that "they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain "riches, but in the living God, who giveth us "richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, "that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtri- "bute, willing to communicate; laying up in "ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt "the time to come." The apoſtle James alſo gives us this general maxim to the ſame purpoſe.

James

James iv. 6. "God reſiſteth the proud, but giv-
"eth grace unto the humble."

Haſty and unreaſonable reſentment is alſo the ſubject of frequent caution and advices in the books of ſcripture; Solomon ſays, Prov. xvi. 32. and xxv. 28. "He that is ſlow to anger, is bet-
"ter than the mighty: and he that ruleth his
"ſpirit, than he that taketh a city. He that hath
"no rule over his own ſpirit, is like a city that is
"broken down, and without walls." David ſays, Pſ. xxxvii. 8. "Ceaſe from anger, and forſake
"wrath: fret not thyſelf in any wiſe to do evil." Our Lord pronounces a bleſſing upon the *meek*, Matt. v. 5. and he repreſents being *angry without cauſe* as a thing of a very criminal nature. The apoſtle Paul exhorts, Phil. iv. 5. that our "mode-
"ration," in this reſpect, "be known unto all
"men, becauſe the Lord is at hand:" and laſtly, *peaceableneſs*, *gentleneſs*, and *meekneſs*, are enumerated by St. Paul among the *fruits of the ſpirit*, while *hatred*, *wrath*, and *ſtrife*, are reckoned among the fruits of the fleſh. Gal. v. 20.

With reſpect to the things of this world, and our condition in it, *induſtry*, but without *anxiety*, is every where recommended to us. More eſpecially, idleneſs is often finely expoſed, and diligence praiſed in the book of Proverbs, ch. vi. 6. "Go
"to the ant, thou ſluggard, conſider her ways,
"and be wiſe." xviii. 9. "He that is ſlothful

"in

"in his work, is brother to him that is a great "waſter." vi. 9. "How long wilt thou ſleep, "O ſluggard? when wilt thou awake out of thy "ſleep? Yet a little ſleep, a little ſlumber, a little "folding of the hands to ſleep. So ſhall thy po- "verty come as one that travelleth, and thy want "as an armed man." The apoſtle Paul, among other advices to the chriſtian converts, exhorts them, Rom. xii. 10. not to be ſlothful in buſineſs; and he himſelf was an example of induſtry, working with his own hands, at his trade of a tent-maker, rather than be burthenſome to the Corinthians, with whom he reſided.

On the other hand, we are perhaps more frequently cautioned againſt exceſſive *anxiety* about the things of this life; and mankind in general, perhaps, ſuffer more in conſequence of it. Envy, which takes its riſe from anxiety, is particularly forbidden in the tenth commandment. Solomon ſays, Prov. xxviii. 20. that "he that maketh haſte "to be rich ſhall not be innocent;" and Agur is repreſented as making this excellent prayer, Prov. xxx. 8. "Give me neither poverty nor riches, "feed me with food convenient for me; leſt I be "full and deny thee, and ſay, who is the Lord? "or leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the name of "my God in vain."

Our Lord adviſes his diſciples, Luke xii. 15, "to take heed and beware of covetouſneſs: for

" that a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance " of the things which he poſſeſſes;" and again, xxi. 34. " Take heed to yourſelves leſt at any " time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting " and drunkenneſs," and " cares of this life," and he adviſes us to lay up " treaſure in heaven, " rather than upon earth," Matt. vi. 19. The apoſtle Paul has many earneſt exhortations upon this ſubject. Heb. xiii. 5. " Let your converſation " be without covetouſneſs, and be content with " ſuch things as ye have." 1 Tim. vi. 6. " God- " lineſs with contentment is great gain: For we " brought nothing into this world, and it is cer- " tain we can carry nothing out. And having " food and raiment, let us be therewith content. " But they that will be rich fall into temptation, " and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful " luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and per- " dition. For the love of money is the root of all " evil, &c." Laſtly, he gives a beautiful deſcrip- tion of the temper of his own mind in this reſpect, Phil. iv. 11. " I have learned in whatſoever ſtate " I am, therewith to be content. I know both " how to be abaſed, and I know how to abound: " every where, and in all things I am inſtructed, " both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound " and to ſuffer need."

It may ſeem extraordinary to ſome perſons, that nothing ſhould be ſaid in the ſcriptures about the crimi-

criminality of what we uſually call *ſelf-murder*; but ſince all thoſe *wrong diſpoſitions of mind*, which lead to it, are ſufficiently cenſured, there was no great reaſon for noticing this particular action, which takes its riſe and its character from them.

The voluntary death of Achitophel, and indeed of Sampſon, in the Old Teſtament, and that of Judas Iſcariot, in the New, are mentioned in the courſe of the hiſtory, together with the circumſtances which led to them, but without any particular cenſure; and Sampſon was even aſſiſted ſupernaturally to put an end to his own life, together with that of his enemies.

Joſephus, in the ſpeech which he made, to diſſuade his countrymen from laying violent hands upon themſelves (which great numbers of the Jews about that time did) De Bello Judaico, lib. iii. cap. 7. makes not uſe of one argument drawn from the ſcriptures, but only from reaſon, or the principles of the heathen philoſophy; ſpeaking of the ſeparate ſtate of the ſoul, of tranſmigration, and of Tartarus.

It ſeems to be ſufficient to ſay, that there is no example in the ſcriptures of any perſon of diſtinguiſhed virtue putting an end to his own life, and that a voluntary death is never mentioned with approbation; and the moſt eminent perſonages, eſpe-

cially Jeſus Chriſt, are recorded to have borne pain and torture to the laſt; without ever thinking of relieving themſelves by a voluntary death. We alſo know that none of the apoſtles, or primitive chriſtians, ever took this method to avoid torture, even when they could have no hope of life; and we cannot but feel that we ſhould have thought meanly of them if they had done ſo; thinking ſuch a degree of impatience and cowardice, as that conduct would have argued, a conſiderable flaw in their characters.

I do not ſee much force in the argument againſt a voluntary death, from the conſideration of life being the *gift of God*, and *a truſt*, which we ought not to reſign without his orders, becauſe every bleſſing of life comes under the ſame deſcription, and yet many of theſe we think ourſelves ſufficiently authoriſed to relinquiſh, according to our own prudence and diſcretion. But to throw away *life* is, in another view, a very different thing from relinquiſhing wealth, rank, or eaſe, &c. for it is putting an end to the whole period of trial and diſcipline, and throwing away the opportunity which adverſity, as a part of it, might afford, to improve us, and fit us for ſomething greater hereafter; and, with reſpect to other perſons, there certainly is not a nobler, or more improving ſpectacle in the world, than that of a good man ſtruggling

gling with undeſerved ſufferings, without a complaint.

But though, on theſe accounts, I ſhould, in all caſes, condemn a man for withdrawing himſelf from the public theatre of life, I would not bring this action under the denomination of *murder*, becauſe they are by no means things of the ſame nature; for, certainly, the temper of mind with which a man deſtroys himſelf, and that with which he kills another, are very different; and the latter is much more malignant, and deſerving of puniſhment, than the former. *Deſpair*, or *fear*, are reprehenſible; but *malice* is certainly of a much more atrocious nature.

Neither can there be any thing peculiarly hazardous in ſuicide, conſidered as the *laſt* crime of which a man is guilty, and of which he has no opportunity of repenting, becauſe it is not a ſingle action, the firſt, the middle, or the laſt of a man's life, that ought, in equity, to determine his character in a future ſtate, but the *whole of his character and conduct*, taken together.

SECTION IV.

Of the means of virtue.

THE ſacred writings not only contain the moſt powerful diſſuaſives from all kinds of vice, and the moſt effectual exhortations to a life of univerſal virtue, but likewiſe a variety of obſervations and advices relating to the manner in which vicious, or virtuous habits, are formed, and the methods by which inordinate affections may be repreſſed, and proper ones promoted.

For this purpoſe, they propoſe conſtant watchfulneſs, frequent meditation on the works and word of God, a careful choice of good company, and great reſolution and ſelf-denial, whenever bad habits are become predominant. They, moreover, adviſe all perſons to watch over one another, and to do every thing to mutual edification:

David ſays, Pſ. cxli. 3. "Set a watch, O "Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my "lips." Our Lord adviſes his diſciples, Matt. xxvi. 41. "To watch and pray, that they enter "not into temptation;" and Mark iv. 18. "To "take heed, leſt when they hear the word, the "cares of this world, and the deceitfulneſs of "riches, and the luſt of other things, entering "in, choke the word, and make it become un-

"fruit-

" fruitful :" and he charges the church at Sardis, Rev. iii. 2. " to be watchful, and ſtrengthen the " things that remain, that are ready to die." Exhortations of a ſimilar nature abound in the apoſtolical writings.

More eſpecially are the *books of ſcripture* recommended to our uſe, as containing the beſt inſtructions for a good life; and being a hiſtory of the divine proceedings, reſpecting the human race, they neceſſarily exhibit ſuch views as cannot but make an impreſſion, in the higheſt degree, favourable to virtue. Moſes repeatedly charges the Iſraelites to read and meditate upon his laws and writings, Deut. vi. 6. " Theſe words which I command " thee this day ſhall be in thine heart. And thou " ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children, " and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine " houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and " when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up." The ſame injunction he repeats, Deut. xi. 18. The kings of Iſrael were moreover required to write out a copy of the law with their own hands, Deut. xvii. 18. " And it ſhall be when he ſitteth upon the " throne of his kingdom, that he ſhall write him a " copy of this law in a book, out of that which is " before the prieſts, the Levites. And it ſhall be " with him, and he ſhall read therein all the days " of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord " his God, to keep all the words of this law, and " theſe ſtatutes, to do them, &c." David ſays

a good man, Pſ. i. 2. That "his delight is in the "law of the Lord, and in his law doth he medi- "tate day and night;" and, Pſ. xxxvii. 31. "The law of his God is in his heart; none of "his ſteps ſhall ſlide." Laſtly, the apoſtle Paul commends the parents of Timothy, and mentions it as a great advantage to him, 2 Tim. iii. 15. that, "from a child he had known the holy ſcrip- "tures, which, he ſays, were able to make him "wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith which is in "Chriſt Jeſus." Concerning the ſame ſcriptures, he adds, that they are "profitable for doctrine, for "reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righ- "teouſneſs: That the man of God may be per- "fect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works."

Solomon repeatedly admoniſhes young perſons concerning the danger of *bad company*. Prov. i. 10. "My ſon, if ſinners intice thee, conſent thou "not;" v. 15. "Walk not thou in the way "with them; refrain thy foot from their path." And he obſerves in general, Prov. xiii. 20, that, "he that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe: "but that a companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed." The apoſtle Paul alſo cautions the Corinthians on this head, when he ſays, 1 Cor. xv. 33. "Be "not deceived: evil communications corrupt good "manners."

The practice of our duty is, in general, repre- ſented in the ſcriptures as *pleaſant* and eaſy, when we

we are accuſtomed to it. Thus Solomon ſays, of wiſdom, Prov. iii. 17. that "her ways are ways "of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace;" and David ſays, Pſ. cxix. 165. "Great peace "have they who love thy law: and nothing ſhall "offend them." Our Saviour alſo ſays, Matt. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of "me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye "ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls. For my yoke is "eaſy, and my burden is light."

But, notwithſtanding this, we are warned, agreeable to what reaſon and nature would apprize us of, that before vicious habits are ſubdued, and virtuous ones formed, great exertions of courage and reſolution will be neceſſary; and the difficulty, in this caſe, is by no means concealed by the writers of the Old and New Teſtament, eſpecially the latter, who generally wrote in times of perſecution. Their writings, accordingly, abound with exhortations to exert proportionate courage and fortitude.

Our Lord expreſſes the difficulty of conquering a propenſity to certain vices, by a very ſtrong figure, when he ſays, Matt. v. 29. "If thy right "eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from "thee, &c." He alſo gives us an idea of the great hardſhips which may attend the profeſſion of chriſtianity, when he ſays, Luke ix. 23. "If any "man will come after me, let him deny himſelf,

" and take up his croſs daily, and follow me, &c." Accordingly, we are exhorted by the apoſtle Paul, Col. iii. 5. To " mortify our members which are " of the earth," and, Rom. xii. 2. " not to be " conformed to this world: but to be transformed " by the renewing of our mind." We ſhall find, however, that the ſcriptures propoſe to us rewards and encouragements, abundantly adequate to the labour and difficulties of which they apprize us.

Laſtly, we are moſt earneſtly exhorted to watch over one another, and to promote our mutual edification by every proper means. Moſes ſays, Lev. xix. 17. " Thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy " neighbour, and not ſuffer ſin upon him." The book of Proverbs contains excellent obſervations concerning the benefit of inſtruction and reproof. Prov. xxviii. 23. " He that rebuketh a man af- " terwards ſhall find more favour than he that " flattereth with the tongue;" and David ſays, Pſ. cxli. 5. " Let the righteous ſmite me, it " ſhall be a kindneſs; and let him reprove me, it " ſhall be an excellent oil." The author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews enjoins, Heb. iii. 13. that we " exhort one another daily while it is called, " To-day; leſt any of us be hardened through the " deceitfulneſs of ſin." We are, in many places, cautioned to *give no offence*; that is, to cauſe none to offend, by any improper liberty of ours. The apoſtle Paul enlarges much upon this ſubject, 1 Cor.

Cor. x. Laſtly, the apoſtle James ſpeaks in the higheſt terms of the man who contributes to the ſpiritual benefit of another, James v. 19. "Bre-"thren, if any of you do err from the truth, and "one convert him: Let him know, that he who "converteth the ſinner from the error of his way, "ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and ſhall hide a "multitude of ſins."

SECTION V.

General remarks concerning morality.

I Shall cloſe this account of *the morality of the Bible*, with ſome obſervations of a more general nature.

It is unqueſtionably a juſt maxim in itſelf, and a clear doctrine of the ſcriptures, that no *partial obedience* to the law of God will be accepted, inſtead of *univerſal obedience*, which is abſolutely required of us. A juſt reſpect to the authority of God, as our ſovereign, lawgiver, and judge, will certainly lead us, as it did the Pſalmiſt, Pſ. cxix. 6. "to have reſpect to all his commandments," and not to admit of ſome, and refuſe others, as we ſhall judge it reaſonable and expedient; or, which is generally the ſame thing, as we ſhall find it *convenient* to us. Such a conduct would not be ex-

cuſed by any earthly ſovereign, maſter, or parent; nor can it be expected to be ſo by the ſupreme Lord and judge of all.

The apoſtle James argues this caſe more particularly, James ii. 10. "Whoſoever ſhall keep the "whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is "guilty of all. For he that ſaid, Do not commit "adultery; ſaid alſo, Do not kill. Now if thou "commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art be-"come a tranſgreſſor of the law."

We are by no means, however, to infer from this, that all crimes and neglects are equal, and will be puniſhed with equal ſeverity; for it is the doctrine of the ſcriptures, as well as of reaſon, that there is a difference in offences, and ſome are ſpoken of with much more indignation than others; in the ſame manner, as more ſtreſs is laid upon ſome virtues than others. Undoubtedly, therefore, a difference will be made between even wilful offences of any kind, and univerſal profligacy of character and conduct. If a ſtate of perfectly exact retribution be naturally impoſſible, we may, however, conclude, that in the future life there will be a near approach to it; and that the proper *reward of chriſtians* will be aſſigned to thoſe only who ſincerely endeavour to do the whole will of God, without diſtinction or reſerve.

For the ſame reaſon no bounds are ſet to our attainments in virtue, but we are required to aim at the

the higheſt degrees of perfection, " to cleanſe our-
" ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and
" to perfect holineſs in the fear of God;" 2 Cor.
vii. 1. " to ſtand perfect and complete in all the
" will of God;" Col. iv. 12. " to abſtain from
all appearance of evil," 1 Theſſ. v. 22. and to
propoſe to ourſelves the imitation of the all-perfect
God himſelf. This was expreſsly inculcated by
our Saviour, Matt. v. 28. " Be ye perfect, even
" as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;" by
the apoſtle Paul, Eph. v. 1. " Be ye followers of
" God, as dear children;" and the apoſtle Peter,
1 Pet. i. 15. " As he that has called you is holy;
" ſo be ye holy in all manner of converſation; For
" it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy," re-
ferring to Lev. xi. 2. xix. 2. xx. 7.

Theſe precepts appear, at firſt view, to be very
ſtrict; and conſidering the imperfections of human
nature, to be unreaſonably ſevere; but conſidering
that, in all caſes, ſufficient allowance is made for
every natural defect, for whatever is conſiſtent with
a ſincere endeavour to do the whole will of God,
there is the greateſt wiſdom and propriety in theſe
exhortations.

Had any particular pitch of virtue been defined,
upon our arrival at which we had been encouraged
to be ſatisfied with ourſelves, without attempting
any thing farther; many perſons, abounding in
conceit and preſumption only, would ſoon have
arrogated

arrogated to themſelves that character, and have been dupes to the moſt fatal deluſion and ſelf-conceit. We even ſee that abſolute perfection has been pretended to by many.

Beſides, ſince moral character is a thing which, in its own nature, admits of no preciſe boundary, but advances, by inſenſible degrees, from the moſt extreme profligacy, to ſuch purity and excellence as only the divine being himſelf is capable of; and ſince it is eſſential to a genuine good diſpoſition to wiſh the attainment of the greateſt degrees of excellence, there would have been an impropriety in moral precepts of any other kind. The man whoſe chief ſtudy it is to recommend himſelf to God, by a conformity to his whole will, cannot but be ſenſible, that whatever his attainments are, or may be, there will ſtill be ſomething more that he *might*, and *ought* to have done; his moral diſcernment being improved by the greater attention which he will continually give to his character and conduct.

Indeed, this is the caſe with all inferior arts of various kinds, as well as this great *art of life*. What poet or painter ever thought his piece abſolutely faultleſs and perfect, with whatever admiration it might be conſidered by others: and could he remove all the blemiſhes he now ſees in it, he would ſtill, by more attention to it, diſcover more. Now, for the ſame reaſon, this muſt neceſſarily be the caſe with

with every man whoſe object is to excel in virtue, and who ſtudies propriety and perfection of moral character.

The apoſtle Paul diſcovers this juſt diſcernment in his own caſe, Phil. iii. 13. "Brethren, I "count not myſelf to have apprehended: but "this one thing I do, forgetting thoſe things "which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe "things which are before, I preſs toward the "mark, for the prize of the high calling of God "in Chriſt Jeſus. Let us therefore, as many as "be perfect, be thus minded." He, and other apoſtles, give many excellent precepts to this purpoſe, to thoſe chriſtians to whom they wrote. 2 Pet. i. 5. "And beſides this, giving all dili-"gence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, "knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and "to temperance, patience; and to patience, god-"lineſs; and to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; "and to brotherly kindneſs, charity. For if theſe "things be in you, and abound, they make you "that ye ſhall neither be barren, nor unfruitful "in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

It is agreeable to the ſame general maxim, that *perſeverance till death* is abſolutely required of all who expect the rewards of the goſpel; and a backſlider at any period, is always repreſented as even in a worſe condition than one who had never known the right way; ſince the knowledge he had of the excellence

excellence of it ought to have been an additional motive with him to continue in it.

To this purpoſe the divine being addreſſes the children of Iſrael by Ezekiel, ch. xviii. 24. "When the righteous turneth away from his "righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity, and "doth according to all the abominations that the "wicked man doth, ſhall he live? All his righ- "teouſneſs that he hath done ſhall not be men- "tioned: in his treſpaſs that he hath treſpaſſed, "and in his ſin that he hath ſinned, in them ſhall "he die." It is alſo our Saviour's doctrine, John viii. 31. "That if we continue in his word, then "are we his diſciples indeed." The aggravation of apoſtacy is particularly pointed out by the apoſtle Peter, 2 Pet. ii. 20. "If after they have eſcaped "the pollutions of the world, through the know- "ledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they "are again entangled therein, and overcome; the "latter end is worſe with them than the beginning. "For it had been better for them not to have "known the way of righteouſneſs, than after "they have known it, to turn from the holy com- "mandment delivered unto them."

On this account the apoſtles urge their fellow-chriſtians to conſtancy in the profeſſion of the goſpel, viz. leſt they ſhould loſe their reward, and enhance their future condemnation. Gal. vi. 9. "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due "ſeaſon

" ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not." 2 John, 8. " Look to yourſelves, that we loſe not thoſe " things which we have wrought; but that we re- " ceive a full reward."

It was the great maxim of the heathen philoſophers of old, as it is with almoſt all thoſe who reject chriſtianity at preſent, to *think with the wiſe, and act with the vulgar*; but a perfect conſiſtency of character and profeſſion is ſtrictly required of chriſtians. In time of perſecution we are allowed, and even commanded, to endeavour to avoid it, by all fair and honeſt methods; ſo that if we be perſecuted in one city, we may flee to another; but on no conſideration whatever are we to *make ſhipwreck of faith and of a good conſcience*, by denying or concealing our chriſtian profeſſion. With reſpect to this great hour of trial, the declarations of our Lord are moſt expreſs and ſolemn.

Having foretold his own ſufferings, and ſeverely rebuked Peter, who could not bear the thought of them, we are told, Mark viii. 34. that " he called " the people unto him with his diſciples, and ſaid " unto them, Whoſoever will come after me, let " him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and " follow me. Whoſoever will ſave his life ſhall " loſe it; but whoſoever ſhall loſe his life for my " ſake and the goſpel's, the ſame ſhall ſave it." Matt. x. 32. " Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me be- " fore men, him will I confeſs alſo before my " Father

" Father who is in heaven. But whoſoever ſhall " deny me before men, him will I alſo deny be- " fore my Father who is in heaven."

Theſe admonitions the apoſtles keep in mind in their writings, and therefore the apoſtle Paul ſays, 2 Tim, ii. 12. " If we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign " with him: if we deny him, he will alſo deny " us." And, acting upon this maxim, thouſands of chriſtians have chearfully laid down their lives for the profeſſion of the chriſtian faith.

It is to be obſerved, that, in the ſcriptures, though the rewards of virtue are only promiſed to perſons of a truly virtuous character and conduct, they are promiſed to thoſe who ſhall ſo repent of their ſins, as to manifeſt a change of character and conduct at any time of the active part of their lives. No perſon, however, has any encouragement from any part of ſcripture, to expect that he ſhall be entitled to the rewards of the goſpel, who repents ſo late, that he has no opportunity of ſhewing a change of conduct at all.

Beſides, few of thoſe late profeſſions of repentance are ſincere, or, if ſincere, would have been laſting; and, according to the uniform language of the ſcriptures, it is " according to the deeds that men have actually done in this life," that they ſhall receive at the hand of God hereafter. 2. Cor. v. 10. " for we muſt all appear before the judg-

" ment

" ment ſeat of Chriſt; that every one may receive
" the things done in his body, according to that he
" hath done, whether it be good or bad. Know-
" ing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we per-
" ſuade men."

It is alledged, indeed, that our Saviour promiſed the thief upon the croſs, that he ſhould be with him in paradiſe; but nothing can be inferred from a caſe ſo very obſcure as this is; for we know nothing of the previous character of this man, we can gueſs but very imperfectly at what is meant by his requeſt, nor do we know preciſely the full import of what our Lord did promiſe him. Beſides, this ſtory is only found in *one* of the evangeliſts, viz. Luke, who appears, by many circumſtances, to have been the leaſt informed of any of them; and Matthew, who was upon the ſpot, ſays, that *both the thieves* reviled Chriſt, without adding one word in favour of either of them. As, therefore, there is no other fact in the hiſtory of the Old or New Teſtament, that gives any countenance to expectations of mercy in a proper *death-bed repentance*, and all the general rules and precepts of the ſcripture abſolutely exclude all hope in this caſe, it muſt be very dangerous to rely upon it; though it is to be feared that many perſons continue to live in a manner which their conſcience diſapproves, in conſequence of deluding themſelves with this miſerable fallacy.

I ſhall

I ſhall conclude this account of the morality of the ſcriptures with obſerving, that it is not delivered ſyſtematically, and at large, either in the Old or New Teſtament; but that it is not on this account the *leſs*, but, in fact, the *more valuable*, becauſe it is delivered in a manner that is both more *intelligible*, and more *forcible*. For, being delivered as particular occaſions ſuggeſt, it has neceſſarily the advantage of a peculiar emphaſis and energy. What precept, for inſtance, againſt pride or hypocriſy, in a general ſyſtem of morals, would have had the force of our Lord's vehement reflections upon the Scribes and Phariſees, and of his affectionate admonitions to his own diſciples on thoſe ſubjects; or what other manner of inſtruction would have recommended a great variety of amiable virtues ſo much as our Lord's method of inculcating them by *example* and pertinent *parables*.

Beſides, what men really want, is not ſo much to know what is their duty, as proper views and motives to induce them to practiſe it. It is, therefore, in general, very properly taken for granted, in the ſcriptures, that men know what it is that God requires of them; and almoſt all the admonitions to virtue go upon that ſuppoſition, enforcing the practice of what is acknowledged to be right, by motives adapted to peculiar ſituations and circumſtances.

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SECTION VI.

Of poſitive inſtitutions.

BESIDE the duties of ſtrictly *moral obligation*, on the obſervance of which our moral cha-cter, and happineſs, chiefly depend: we find in velation, that the divine being has been pleaſed enjoin ſeveral obſervances, which are not in iemſelves of a moral nature, but which ultimately nd to promote good morals, and that juſt ſtate of ind, which makes the practice of our duty in her reſpects eaſy to us. Theſe are the obſervance one day in ſeven for the purpoſe of reſt from la-our, which is obligatory on all mankind; the obſer-ance of a large ritual of ceremonies by the Jews, id of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper by the ariſtians. Of each of theſe, in the order of hich I now have mentioned them, I ſhall give a eneral account, with a view to explain the na-ire and uſe of them.

§ 1 *Of*

§ 14. *Of the obſervance of the Sabbath.*

WE are expreſsly told, in the books of Moſes, that the obſervance of the *ſabbath*, or of reſt from labour every ſeventh day, was appointed in commemoration of the day on which God reſted from the creation of the heavens and the earth, which was completed in ſix days. This injunction being laid upon Adam, neceſſarily affects all his poſterity. Gen. ii. 2. "And on the ſeventh "day God ended his work which he had made: "and he reſted on the ſeventh day from all his "work which he had made. And God bleſſed "the ſeventh day, and ſanctified it: becauſe that "in it he had reſted from all his work which God "created and made." But we have a more particular account of the reſt to be obſerved on this day, in the fourth commandment, Ex. xx. 8. "Remember the ſabbath-day, to keep it holy. "Six days ſhalt thou labour, and do all thy "work. But the ſeventh day is the ſabbath of the "Lord thy God: in it thou ſhalt not do any "work, thou, nor thy ſon, nor thy daughter, thy "man-ſervant, nor thy maid-ſervant, nor thy "cattle, nor the ſtranger that is within thy gates. "For, in ſix days the Lord made heaven and earth,

"the

"the ſea, and all that in them is, and reſted the "ſeventh day: wherefore the Lord bleſſed the "ſabbath-day, and hallowed it."

Beſides this reaſon for keeping the ſabbath, which equally affects all mankind, we ſometimes find other arguments inſiſted upon, which reſpect the Jews only, as Deut. v. 15. "Remember "that thou waſt a ſervant in the land of Egypt, "and that the Lord thy God brought thee out "thence through a mighty hand, and by a ſtretch-"ed out arm: therefore the Lord thy God com-"manded thee to keep the ſabbath-day." It appears from theſe paſſages, that the proper purpoſe of the ſabbath is *reſt from bodily labour*. But, on this account, it is alſo peculiarly ſeaſonable for ſerious reflection of mind, and devout meditation on the works of God; and by this means it is exceedingly uſeful for correcting the unfavourable influence, which a cloſe and uninterrupted attention to the buſineſs of this life naturally has upon our minds; impreſſing us with juſt ſentiments, and thereby preparing us for good conduct in life. Accordingly, we find in the Old, but more eſpecially in the New Teſtament, that this uſe was made of the ſabbath both by the Jews and chriſtians, there being ſtated aſſemblies on this day for reading the ſcriptures and public prayer.

The ſabbath was alſo diſtinguiſhed under the law of Moſes by an additional ſacrifice of two lambs

lambs, beſides the daily burnt offering, Numb. xxviii. 9. And the ninety-ſecond Pſalm being intituled, "a pſalm or ſong for the ſabbath-day," was probably compoſed, in order to be ſung in the temple-ſervice of that day.

As we find, 2 Kings iv. 23, that it was cuſtomary with the Jews of old to reſort to their prophets on the ſabbath-day, and alſo on the new moons, it is not improbable but that the prophets, and other perſons learned in their law, were uſed to explain it on thoſe days to the people. Where no ſuch perſons were at hand, it is probable that maſters of private families read the ſcriptures in their own houſes; or ſeveral families might join, and aſſemble together for the purpoſe, and this might give occaſion to the inſtitution of *ſynagogues*, which anſwered the ſame end. Theſe aſſemblies were in univerſal uſe in our Saviour's time, and had been ſo, as is generally agreed, from the time of Ezra, if they were not as old as the time of king David, who is thought to allude to them in ſome of his Pſalms.

Chriſt having riſen from the dead on the firſt day of the week, which is diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of *the Lord's day*, and having afterwards appeared to his diſciples on that day, in preference to any other, it ſeems from thence to have grown into a cuſtom, with the apoſtles and primitive chriſtians,

to

to aſſemble for public worſhip on that day, rather than on the ſeventh; and though the chriſtian Jews probably continued for ſome time to meet on the ſeventh day alſo, yet, by degrees, the obſervance of that day for the purpoſe of public worſhip grew out of uſe.

Our preſent practice was certainly that of the earlieſt chriſtians, whoſe cuſtoms we are able to trace, and there having never been any controverſy upon the ſubject, we may ſafely conclude, that they derived it from the apoſtles; and their authority is ſufficient for us. Nor does it make any material difference whether we be certified of their practice by their own writings, or any other ſufficient evidence. In fact, it does not ſeem to be very material, what particular day of the week we ſet apart for reſt and public worſhip, provided we conſcientiouſly appropriate the ſame portion of our time to that uſe.

That ſome portion of time ſhould be ſet apart for the purpoſe of public worſhip, ſeems to be highly reaſonable of itſelf, excluſive of all expreſs authority; ſince ſocieties, as ſuch, depend upon God, as well as the individuals that compoſe them; and therefore they owe him the ſame homage; and it is moſt natural, that public thankſgivings, confeſſions, and petitions, ſhould be made by as many of the ſociety as can conveniently aſſemble for that purpoſe. Every perſon, therefore, who conſiders him-

ſelf as a member of ſociety, and having a common intereſt with it, ſhould, on this account, attend the public worſhip of God; and what time is ſo convenient for this purpoſe, as the day of reſt from labour and worldly buſineſs. The mind will naturally be moſt compoſed, and, on every account, the fitteſt for religious exerciſes on that day; and the devotion of individuals is greatly ſtrengthened by the example of others joining with them.

It is an additional argument in favour of public worſhip, that the cuſtom promotes ſociety and friendſhip, by affording frequent opportunities for the people of a neighbourhood meeting and ſeeing one another, eſpecially as the buſineſs of the day tends to promote mutual love, and all the ſocial virtues.

The ſabbath, among the Jews (and for the ſame reaſon, it ſhould apply to the Lord's day among the chriſtians) is expreſsly ordered to be a day of reſt for the *cattle*, as well as for man. It muſt be exceedingly wrong, therefore, to make the labouring cattle work on that day; and in this view it is a moſt reaſonable and merciful inſtitution.

As the moſt important uſe of a weekly day of reſt (on which the attention of the mind is withdrawn from the uſual cares of life) is ſerious and uſeful reflection, in order to the moral culture of the mind, it muſt be wrong, as evidently interfering with this end of the inſtitution, to give way to exceſſive

ceſſive levity, and eſpecially to uſe noiſy and riotous diverſions on that day; though a chearful, rather than an auſtere manner of ſpending it, is favourable to its proper uſe. Our Saviour was far from approving of the rigorous and ſuperſtitious manner in which the Phariſees ſpent their ſabbath, and we cannot think that more gloom and rigour becomes the chriſtian than the Jewiſh inſtitutions. Since all poſitive ordinances are in their own nature ſubordinate to duties of moral obligation, it is evident, that the reſt of the ſabbath ſhould give place to labour, when acts of juſtice, benevolence, and mercy, muſt otherwiſe be neglected.

§ 2. *Of ſacrifices.*

BEFORE I proceed any farther in my account of thoſe ſcripture precepts, which are not properly of a moral nature, but are ſubſervient to moral purpoſes, I ſhall treat briefly of *ſacrifices*. Of the *origin* of ſacrifices, conſiſting either of the preſentation of fruits, or the killing and burning of animals, we have no account; but we find that they were permitted, and even expreſsly appointed by God, on a great variety of occaſions.

If, as it is poſſible, ſacrifices were not originally of divine appointment, we may ſuppoſe, that the natural foundation, or original of them, was the

ſame, in general, with that of prayer, viz. a method which mankind thought of, to expreſs the ſenſe they had of their gratitude and obligation to God for the gifts and protection of his providence, and to procure farther favours from him; and no kind of action was ſo proper for this purpoſe as the devoting to him ſome part of their ſubſtance, and eſpecially ſuch articles as contributed to their daily ſupport.

It is to this day a cuſtom throughout the eaſt, never to approach any ſuperior, or patron without a preſent. And, in this caſe, the value of the preſent is not ſo much conſidered, as its being a token of reſpect and homage. Thus we read, that when a Perſian peaſant was ſurpriſed by the approach of his prince, ſo that he had nothing at hand to preſent him with, he ran and fetched a handful of water from a neighbouring brook, rather than accoſt him without any offering. It is probable, that, in conformity to theſe general ideas, which are ſtill prevalent in the Eaſt, the Iſraelites were forbidden *to appear before the Lord empty.*

When mankind thought of giving any thing to God, they would, probably, at firſt, only leave it in ſome open place, and abſtain from making any farther uſe of it themſelves; but afterwards, obſerving many things waſted away, or conſumed by the heat of the ſun, which is the great viſible agent of God in this world, and other things ſuddenly conſumed

conſumed by lightning, which was always conſidered as more immediately ſent by God; they might naturally enough fall into the notion, that *conſumption by fire*, was the manner in which God took things. They might, therefore, imagine, that burning things, at the ſame time that it moſt effectually alienated them from the uſe of man, would likewiſe be the moſt proper, and the moſt decent method of devoting them to God; eſpecially, as nothing was left to putrify, and become offenſive after burning; and in ſome caſes, as in the burning of incenſe, little or nothing would remain afterwards.

Conſidering the very low conceptions which mankind in early ages had of God, we do not wonder to find that they conſider him as, in ſome manner, partaking with them of their ſacrifices; and, therefore, that they conſidered them more eſpecially as an expreſſion of *reconciliation and friendſhip*; which idea is naturally, and eſpecially in the Eaſt, connected with that of eating and drinking together, and particularly eating the ſame ſalt. In this view it is obſervable, that no ſacrifice among the Jews was to be made without this ingredient.

This account of ſacrifices is, in ſome meaſure, illuſtrated and confirmed by the hiſtory of the Greeks and Romans, whoſe ſacrifices, originally, conſiſted of ſuch things only as were

their cuſtomary food. Thus, it is acknowledged, that all their ſacrifices were at firſt *bloodleſs*, conſiſting of vegetables only; and that this practice continued till they themſelves procured a ſufficiency of animal food, upon which they began to ſacrifice animals. The Greeks alſo expreſsly ſpeak of *temples* as the houſes of their Gods, of *altars* as their tables, and of *prieſts* as their ſervants.

The ſame general ideas we find among the Jews, and the divine being plainly alludes to them when he is repreſented as ſaying, Pſ. l. "Shall I eat "the fleſh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" Which reproof was not intended to cenſure or change the general idea which they had annexed to ſacrifices (as a transferring of their ſubſtance from themſelves to God) but to reſtrain the very groſs ideas which ſome of them might have entertained in purſuance of it, to prevent their laying too much ſtreſs upon theſe ceremonies, and to remind them of the greater importance of things of a moral nature, as being infinitely more pleaſing to God.

There was not, originally, any particular order of men employed in the buſineſs of ſacrifices, but every man ſacrificed, as well as prayed, in perſon, being prieſt as well as king in his own family; and in thoſe primitive patriarchal times, it does not appear that any part of a ſacrifice was eaten by the offerer, but that the whole was devoted to God,

and

and entirely conſumed with fire. But when, under the Moſaic diſpenſation, a particular order of men were appointed for the purpoſe, they were conſidered as the more immediate *ſervants of God*; and there being a manifeſt propriety, that ſervants ſhould be fed from their maſter's table, theſe prieſts were allowed a certain ſhare in moſt ſacrifices. Such, at leaſt, is the opinion of the Jewiſh Rabbi's with reſpect to the cuſtom of ſacrificing before and under the law.

Sacrifices, being of the nature of a *gift*, preſented as a token of reſpect or homage, they naturally accompanied every ſolemn addreſs to the divine being, as the moſt decent and proper ceremonial in approaching him; and being likewiſe conſidered as a *convivial entertainment*, at which the divine being himſelf was preſent, there was a peculiar propriety in their accompanying petitions for the pardon of ſin, as expreſſive of reconciliation and friendſhip. At the ſame time, the ſacrifices being provided at the expence of the offending party, they indirectly anſwer the purpoſe of *mulcts*, or fines for offences.

Though I have ſaid, that it is poſſible that mankind might of themſelves have had recourſe to ſacrifices, as a method of expreſſing their dependence upon God, &c. yet, when we conſider how improbable it is, that mankind ſhould even have attained to any tolerable and uſeful knowledge of

God himſelf, without ſome particular inſtruction, at leaſt for a long ſpace of time; it is moſt natural to ſuppoſe, that when the divine being communicated that moſt important knowledge to the firſt race of men, he alſo inſtructed them in thoſe methods by which he choſe that they ſhould expreſs their homage, gratitude, and obedience. But whether we ſuppoſe ſacrifices to have been of human, or divine origin, it makes no difference with reſpect to the general idea of their nature and uſe.

§ 3. *Of the Jewiſh ritual.*

BESIDES the precepts and obſervances which it has pleaſed the divine being to enjoin with reſpect to the whole human race, he provided, what we may call, a much ſtricter, and more ſevere diſcipline for the Hebrew nation, whom he diſtinguiſhed by frequent revelations of his will, by many interpoſitions in their favour, and a peculiar conſtitution of civil government, in which he himſelf more immediately preſided.

They were reſtricted in their diet, being confined to the uſe of certain kinds of food; but they are ſuch as are now generally eſteemed to be the moſt innocent in their nature, mild in their qualities, and leaſt apt to become ſatiating by frequent uſe. They would therefore tend to impreſs upon

upon the minds of thoſe who were confined to them an idea of their obligation to greater purity and innocence, and make them conſider themſelves as a *holy nation*, peculiarly devoted to God. The uſe of ſuch food would alſo, of itſelf, probably, incline them to a peaceful inoffenſive life, as it is thought that the ranker kinds of food tend to make mankind fierce and cruel.

A great part of the ritual of the Hebrews ſeems to have been intended to preſerve upon their minds a ſenſe of their immediate relation to God, and of their obligation to a conſtant intercourſe with him. There was one particular place within their country, to which they were to reſort, where the divine being was to be conſulted by them, and where he manifeſted himſelf in a more eſpecial manner. In this place, which was firſt a moveable tabernacle, and afterwards the temple at Jeruſalem, he had a conſtant habitation, keeping, as it were, a regular court, with ſuitable attendants. Here he received their gifts and homage, and here he gave them inſtructions and advice on a variety of occaſions, when they applied to him in a proper manner.

More eſpecially, the great object of the Hebrew ritual ſeems to have been to inſpire the minds of that people with an abhorrence of the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and to preſerve among them the pure worſhip of the one only living and true God. For this reaſon many of their rites were

the very reverſe of thoſe of their neighbours, ſo as to be altogether incompatible with them, and muſt conſequently have tended to make them averſe to them. Upon every occaſion the importance of their adherence to this preciſe mode of worſhip was ſtrongly inculcated upon them, a particular and remarkable providence attended them through the whole courſe of their hiſtory (and ſtill attends them) giving them proſperity and ſucceſs while they were obedient, and making the hand of God viſible in their puniſhment, when they departed from his worſhip, and relapſed into idolatry, or when they became, in other reſpects, profligate and wicked.

To prevent, as far as poſſible, the abuſe and corruption of this religion, nothing of the leaſt conſequence was left to the diſcretion of the people, but every minute particular, as thoſe relating to the ſtructure of the tabernacle, and the building of the temple, the kinds of ſacrifices, the ceremonies attending them, and every thing that was to be done on their public feſtivals, was rigidly preſcribed to them, and they were not allowed to make the leaſt deviation. For the ſame purpoſe, and alſo to preſerve a proper degree of union among a people who were originally to have had no temporal head, they were allowed to have but one altar, and no ſacrifice was to be made but at that one place, and by certain perſons appointed for that purpoſe; and three times every year, viz. at their public feſtivals,

feſtivals, every male was to make his appearance before the Lord, at the place of his reſidence, in the tabernacle, or temple.

Several things in the Hebrew ritual were perhaps intended to ſerve as types of Chriſt, or to bear ſome reſemblance to him and his religion, and therefore the author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews calls them "a ſhadow of good things to come." Heb. x. 1.

On the other hand, it may be obſerved, that the author of this epiſtle perhaps only intended to draw a compariſon between the Hebrew ritual and ſuch particulars in the chriſtian ſyſtem as moſt nearly reſemble it, only as other compariſons and figures are uſed, merely for illuſtration, without ſuppoſing that there was *originally*, and in the divine mind, a reference from the one to the other. Thus when the apoſtle Paul ſays, 1 Cor. x. 2. "that the Iſ-"raelites were all baptized to Moſes in the cloud, "and in the ſea," he can hardly be ſuppoſed to have meant, that the ſprinkling of the water upon that people, or their being, as it were, plunged in it, by the water riſing over their heads, was a proper type of baptiſm; but only, that by a common figure of ſpeech, it might be ſo termed; or that the *rock* which ſupplied them with water was really Chriſt, as the ſame apoſtle calls it, 1 Cor. x. 4. or a type of Chriſt, but only that, in ſome reſpects, it might be compared to him, or he to it.

In ſome caſes alſo, it is very poſſible, that the apoſtles and evangeliſts might imagine there was a reference to Chriſt, when no ſuch thing was originally intended.

It is very remarkable, that when the ſacrifices under the law are ſpoken of in the Old Teſtament, as inſufficient to render the offer acceptable to God, there is never the moſt diſtant alluſion to any more perfect ſacrifice, to which they are commonly ſuppoſed to have referred, and of which they are ſaid to have been the types, but to *good works* only, which are always mentioned in oppoſition to them. Thus David ſays, Pſ. li. 16. "Thou deſireſt not "ſacrifice, elſe would I give it: thou delighteſt "not in burnt-offering. The ſacrifices of God "are a broken ſpirit: a broken and a contrite "heart, O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe*" Now it can hardly be ſuppoſed but that, if ſacrifices had really been deſigned for types, there would have been, in ſome place or other, a reference, more or leſs plain, to the thing which they were intended to prefigure, and from their relation to which they derived all their efficacy.

* This particular paſſage is differently rendered in the Seventy, and by this means probably the author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, chap. x. came to give a different turn to it. See, however, the following paſſages, which expreſs the ſame ſentiment with this. Iſ. i. 10—lxvi. 2. &c. Jer. vi. 8. &c. Amos v. 21. &c. Micah vi. 6. &c.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, ſeveral of the Hebrew cuſtoms were intended to commemorate remarkable occurrences in their hiſtory, eſpecially ſuch as led them to recollect and reflect upon the divine interpoſitions in their favour. Thus, the paſſover was inſtituted in commemoration of the deſtroying angel having paſſed over the houſes of the Iſraelites, when he killed the firſt-born in every family of the Egyptians: the feaſt of Pentecoſt was a memorial of the giving of the law on mount Sinai; and the feaſt of Tabernacles, of their reſiding many years in the wilderneſs, when they lived in tents, and were fed with manna from heaven. Alſo the rite of circumciſion was inſtituted as a token and pledge of the covenant which God made with Abraham, or of the promiſe that he would give him the land of Canaan.

It is not eaſy to ſay how far, and in what reſpects, the Jewiſh diſpenſation was intended to be abrogated by chriſtianity. Chriſt himſelf gave no hint of any ſuch deſign, except it be implied in his ſaying, Matt. v. 18. that "one title ſhall in no "wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled;" or in his diſcourſe with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21. "The hour cometh, when ye ſhall "neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, "worſhip the Father. But the hour cometh, and "now is, when the true worſhippers ſhall worſhip "the Father in ſpirit and in truth."

And

And though the apoſtle Paul, in his Epiſtle to the Romans, ch. vii. argues, in a figurative manner, that the Jews were become "dead to the law "by the body of Chriſt, that they might be mar-"ried to another," yet it appears from the book of Acts, that he himſelf ſtrictly conformed to the temple-ſervice, as all other Jewiſh chriſtians did, after the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Chriſt. Paul did not only himſelf "walk orderly, and keep the "law," Acts xxi. 24. but cauſed Timothy to be circumciſed upon his converſion to chriſtianity, becauſe his mother was a Jeweſs, though his father was a Greek. Acts xvi. 1.

With reſpect to *meats*, the divine being ſeems to have intimated to Peter, that the diſtinction between clean and unclean was aboliſhed. For by the viſion of the ſheet let down from heaven, Acts x. 11. and the command, "Riſe, Peter, kill and "eat," it ſeems to have been intended to intimate, not only that no nation or people were unclean in the ſight of God, but that thoſe kinds of food which the Jews had been taught to conſider as unclean, were now no longer ſo. We alſo find that Peter himſelf, when he was among the Gentiles, at Antioch, "lived after the manner of the Gen-"tiles, and not as the Jews." Gal. ii. 14. though, upon the arrival of Jews from Jeruſalem, he abſtained, for fear of giving offence; a conduct for which he was juſtly reproved by Paul.

As

As long as the temple ſtood, the ſervice of it was kept up, and attended upon by the believing, as well as the unbelieving Jews, and none of the apoſtles dropped ſo much as a hint of there being any thing improper or wrong in it. When the temple was deſtroyed, the ſervice of it ceaſed of courſe, juſt as it did at the Babyloniſh captivity. But it is remarkable, that in the prophecies of Ezekiel, relating to the reſtoration of the Jews, the moſt expreſs mention is made of the rebuilding of the temple, and the reſtoration of the temple-ſervice, and eſpecially of ſacrifices, Ezekiel xliii. 18. And it will hardly be ſuppoſed, that the converſion of the Jews to chriſtianity will not take place at leaſt very ſoon after their reſtoration.

As the Jews are ſtill to continue a diſtinct people, and will probably be the medium of the divine communications, to the reſt of the world, it is not improbable, but that they will always continue to be diſtinguiſhed by certain peculiar obſervances and religious rites; but whether the whole, or what particular part of their antient ritual will be retained, it is impoſſible for us to ſay.

§ 4. *Of Baptiſm.*

ALL the poſitive inſtitutions, of which an account has yet been given, were antecedent to chriſtianity. The two which remain to be treated of, viz. baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, are peculiar to it.

Baptiſm is the appointed manner in which a perſon takes upon him the profeſſion of chriſtianity, or by which a perſon is admitted to the privileges of the diſciples of Chriſt; and was probably intended to repreſent the waſhing away, or renouncing the impurities of ſome former ſtate, viz. the ſins he had committed, and the vicious habits he had contracted; and it is to be obſerved, that the profeſſion of repentance always accompanied, or was underſtood to accompany, the profeſſion of faith in Chriſt. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven "is at hand," was the general exhortation both of John the Baptiſt and of Chriſt; and, "Repent "and believe the goſpel; Repent and be convert-"ed, that your ſins may be blotted out," was the general ſtrain of the apoſtles' preaching. *Now*, ſays Paul to the Athenians, "God commandeth all "men, every where, to repent." Acts xvii. 30.

We find no account of baptiſm, as a diſtinct religious rite, before the miſſion of John, the forerunner

runner of Chriſt, who was called *the Baptiſt*, on account of his being commanded by God to baptize with water all who ſhould hearken to his invitation to repent. Waſhing, however, accompanied many of the Jewiſh rites, and, indeed, was required after contracting any kind of uncleanneſs. Alſo, ſoon after the time of our Saviour, we find it to have been the cuſtom of the Jews ſolemnly to baptize, as well as to circumciſe all their proſelytes. As their writers treat largely of the *reaſons* for this rite, and give no hint of its being a novel inſtitution, it is probable, that this had always been the cuſtom antecedent to the time of Moſes, whoſe account of the rite of circumciſion, and of the manner of performing it, is by no means circumſtantial. Or baptiſm, after circumciſing, might have come into uſe gradually, from the natural propriety of the thing, and its eaſy conformity to other Jewiſh cuſtoms. For, if no Jew could approach the tabernacle, or temple, after the moſt trifling uncleanneſs, without bathing, much leſs would it be thought proper to admit a proſelyte from a ſtate ſo impure and unclean as heatheniſm was conceived to be, without the ſame mode of purification.

When a maſter of a family became a proſelyte to Judaiſm, he was required to circumciſe both himſelf and his houſhold. Thus Abraham was expreſsly commanded to circumciſe both his ſon Iſhmael,

Iſhmael, who had no intereſt in the promiſe of which circumciſion was a ſeal, and alſo all his ſlaves, "thoſe who were bought with his money." Gen. xvii. 13.

The reaſon of this practice does not eaſily appear to us, whoſe cuſtoms and modes of thinking are ſo different from thoſe which prevailed, and which ſtill prevail, in the Eaſt. The power of a maſter of a family was very extenſive, and the actions and cuſtoms by which he expreſſed his own character or reſolution, generally extended to all the branches of it. Thus, when the Ninevites made ſolemn profeſſion of their repentance, they clothed even their cattle in ſack-cloth, and made them faſt as well as themſelves; not that they could imagine that the brute beaſts were capable of repentance, or could have done any thing to diſpleaſe God; but this mournful appearance of every thing about them, was conceived to be expreſſive of *their own* contrition and humiliation. Jonah iii. 7.

It being the univerſal cuſtom, therefore, for the maſter of a family to circumciſe, and probably, alſo, to baptize his children and ſlaves, as well as himſelf, upon his making profeſſion of Judaiſm; and the propriety of the thing being exceedingly obvious to all the people in the Eaſt, it would be taken for granted, that baptiſm, if it was uſed at all, was to be adminiſtered in the ſame undiſtinguiſhed

guiſhed manner, when a perſon made profeſſion of chriſtianity; and the command to *baptize all nations* would neceſſarily have been underſtood in this ſenſe, unleſs our Lord had added ſome expreſs reſtriction.

Accordingly we find, that when the jailor, who had the cuſtody of Paul, was converted, both himſelf was baptized, and *all his.* Acts xvi. 33. Alſo when Lydia was converted, it is ſaid, that ſhe was baptized, and *her houſhold.* Acts xvi. 15. Now, by this phraſe, a Jew, and even a Roman, would neceſſarily underſtand, that both the principal perſon himſelf, and all who were *under his immediate power*, either as a parent or a maſter, were included.

What the Jews did with reſpect to young men, grown up to years of underſtanding, but living with their parents, when they were converted to Judaiſm, is not ſaid: but it is probable, that they were not circumciſed without their own conſent, as in general it muſt have been the caſe with ſlaves. And ſince chriſtianity is evidently more of a *perſonal* concern, and men are chiefly intereſted in it as individuals, and not as members of ſocieties, or even of families, it may be taken for granted, that only young children were required to be baptized along with their believing parents.

As ſlaves, we find, were often converted without their maſters, and chriſtianity made no diſtinction

tion between bond or free, as being of the ſame value in the eye of God, it will hardly be thought probable, that ſlaves were ever baptized without their own conſent. At leaſt, the cuſtom did not continue long, eſpecially as ſlaves were about that time growing more independent of their maſters, acquiring civil as well as religious privileges; till at length, through the influence of maxims which chriſtianity greatly countenanced, they were univerſally manumitted in Europe.

The baptiſm of children, therefore, is to be conſidered as one part of a man's own profeſſion of chriſtianity, and conſequently an obligation upon him to educate his children in the principles of the chriſtian religion. If a child have no parents, or none who will engage for his religious inſtruction, other perſons, who will undertake this kind office, are ſo far its parents, and therefore may baptize it, as they would do their own children.

Laſtly, I would obſerve, that it is an argument in favour of the baptizing of infants, to which I do not ſee how any ſatisfactory reply can be made, that it appears, from the hiſtory of the chriſtian church, to have been the conſtant practice from the time of the apoſtles. The firſt mention that is made of it is as of an *uncontroverted practice*, and it is even *argued from*, as an univerſally received cuſtom, againſt very intelligent perſons, to whoſe

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cauſe itwould have been of the greateſt advantage to have proved it to be novel, or of no authority. This was more eſpecially the caſe with Pelagius; for, though Auſtin, in ſupport of his doctrine of original ſin, appeals to the practice of infant baptiſm, as being neceſſary to do it away, his antagoniſt does not pretend to diſpute the fact, but only denies that this was the uſe of it.

Now it is certainly highly improbable, that ſuch a cuſtom as that of infant-baptiſm ſhould have been eſtabliſhed ſo early as it appears to have been, contrary to the apoſtolical practice, and no trace be left of the innovation; eſpecially when every thing belonging to chriſtianity, about which all perſons were not entirely agreed, became ſo ſoon the ſubject of the moſt eager contention and debate. And it does not appear to be of any conſequence by what argument we can infer, that any opinion or practice was apoſtolical, whether by their own writing, or any other *ſufficient evidence.* They could not themſelves be miſtaken in a caſe of this nature, and their practice is an authoritative rule for us.

§ 5.

§ 5. *Of the Lord's Supper.*

THE Lord's ſupper, conſiſting of eating bread, and drinking wine, is a religious rite inſtituted by Chriſt, in commemoration of his death; the breaking of the bread more eſpecially repreſenting the wounding of the body of Chriſt, and the pouring out of the wine, the ſhedding of his blood; and this rite is to continue to be celebrated by the diſciples of Chriſt till his ſecond coming.

The deſign of this inſtitution being to ſerve as a memorial, or record, of that important fact of the death of Chriſt, it may be conſidered as one monument of the truth of the chriſtian religion, as was obſerved in a preceding part of this work.

Being more eſpecially a memorial of the death of Chriſt, in which he chiefly manifeſted the love that he bore to mankind, it furniſhes the moſt proper opportunity of recollecting the love of Chriſt, and rejoicing in the conſideration of the bleſſings of his goſpel.

Since this rite is peculiar to chriſtians, it likewiſe ſerves as a public declaration of our being chriſtians; and is, conſequently, a recognizing of the obligation we are under to live as become chriſtians. For no man can ſay that he is a chriſtian, and eſpecially in a public and ſolemn manner,

ner, without acknowledging that he is obliged to live as becomes a chriſtian. Joining habitually in public worſhip, implies very much the ſame thing.

Laſtly, as, in this rite, we more eſpecially commemorate the death of Chriſt, it ſerves to remind us, that we are the profeſſed diſciples of a crucified maſter; and, therefore, muſt not expect better treatment from this world than our Lord met with from it: that we muſt lay our account with meeting with hardſhips, reproach, and perſecution, as he did, and that we ſhould contentedly and patiently bear them, rather than quit the profeſſion of our faith, or do any thing unworthy of it; in full aſſurance that, if we "ſuffer for Chriſt, we "ſhall alſo reign with him, and be glorified to-"gether."

This rite having ſuch excellent moral uſes, and the celebration of it being an expreſs command of Chriſt, who ſaid, "Do this in remembrance of "me," I do not ſee how any perſon, profeſſing chriſtianity, can ſatisfy himſelf with refuſing to join in it. In the primitive times, the celebration of the Lord's ſupper made a part of the ordinary ſervice every Lord's day, and every perſon who was thought worthy to be conſidered as a member of a body of chriſtians partook of it. Whenever, indeed, any perſon profeſſing chriſtianity behaved in a manner unworthy of the chriſtian name, ſo as to be in danger of bringing a reproach upon it, he

he was excommunicated; in conſequence of which, he was cut off from joining in any part of chriſtian worſhip, and from this among the reſt; but there was no diſtinction made between this and other parts of the ſervice, eſpecially the prayers of the church. An excommunicated perſon was one who was publicly declared not to belong to a chriſtian ſociety; and, therefore, the church would not conſent to any thing that ſhould imply their acknowledging him in the character of a brother, and declined aſſociating with him. The reaſon of this conduct was moſt evident, becauſe the good name of chriſtians, and of chriſtian ſocieties, was a thing of the greateſt conſequence to the propagation of chriſtianity in thoſe early times; and it ought to be conſidered at all times as a matter of great conſequence.

Conſidering that Chriſt abſolutely requires of all his diſciples the moſt open and public profeſſion of his religion, notwithſtanding all the hazards to which it may expoſe them, and has declared, that unleſs we "confeſs him before men," he will not acknowledge us before his heavenly father; it certainly behoves all chriſtians to take this, as well as every other method, of declaring, in a public manner, their profeſſion of chriſtianity. Moreover, as baptiſm is generally adminiſtered in infancy, and is not the act of the perſon baptized, it ſeems neceſſary, that there ſhould be ſome pub-

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lic act, by which thoſe who are baptized in their infancy, ſhould openly, and in their own perſons, declare themſelves chriſtians; and the moſt proper manner of doing this, is certainly the receiving of the Lord's ſupper.

According to the cuſtom of the primitive church, a cuſtom ſo antient and uncontroverted, as, with me, to carry ſufficient evidence of its having been an apoſtolical one, all perſons who are baptized, children as well as others, ſhould receive the Lord's ſupper. It is nothing leſs than the revival of this cuſtom that will ſecure a general attendance upon this ordinance; and no objection can be made to it, except what may, with equal ſtrength, be made to bringing children to public worſhip at all, ſince they are as incapable of underſtanding the one as the other. Nor would this antient and uſeful cuſtom have been ever laid aſide, if it had not been for the introduction of a train of ſuperſtitious notions, which made this plain and ſimple ordinance appear continually more myſterious and awful; till, at length, the monſtrous doctrine of tranſubſtantiation was completely eſtabliſhed.

Indeed, it is not a little remarkable, that the cuſtom of giving the euchariſt to children, was not finally aboliſhed in any place till that doctrine had obtained the full ſanction of the church of Rome; and that it maintains its ground to this very day, in all thoſe chriſtian churches which were never

ſubject to that antichriſtian power, whoſe ſpiritual uſurpations and corruptions of the goſpel have been immenſe, and have extended to almoſt every thing belonging to it.

SECTION VI.

Of the government of chriſtian churches.

I Shall conclude theſe obſervations on the poſitive inſtitutions of chriſtianity with a ſhort account of the primitive regulations for the government of chriſtian churches; which, though not of divine appointment, were ſuch as the wiſdom of the apoſtles thought to be the moſt convenient for tranſacting the buſineſs of chriſtian ſocieties, and making them ſubſervient to the purpoſe of improvement in knowledge and goodneſs.

Chriſtian churches were formed upon the plan of the Jewiſh ſynagogues, in which a number of the more elderly and reſpectable members preſided, with the title of *elders*, or *overſeers*, which in the Greek language is expreſſed by the word which in Engliſh is rendered *biſhop*; and one of theſe perſons was generally, by way of pre-eminence in point of *honour*, but not of *power*, ſtiled the chief, or maſter of the ſynagogue.

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The principal buſineſs of elders in chriſtian churches was to attend equally to the inſtruction and good conduct of the ſociety, and to paſs cenſures in caſe of improper conduct. In general, ſome of them gave more particular attention to reading and exhortation, and from theſe elders, the ſociety uſually expected an expoſition of thoſe portions of ſcripture which were read in their aſſemblies every Lord's day; but any perſon who was preſent might, with the leave of the biſhop, either expound the ſcriptures, or exhort the people.

Theſe elders were choſen by the people, and, with their approbation, were *ordained*, or recommended to the divine bleſſing by prayer, in which the elders of other churches aſſiſted. Along with prayer they uſed *impoſition of hands*, which was nothing more than a ceremony which they conſtantly uſed when they prayed for any particular perſon, on any occaſion whatever; and to this the extenſion of the hands of the perſon who prayed over, or towards any larger body of people, correſponded.

Beſides elders, there were alſo, in all chriſtian churches, perſons who attended to the civil concerns of them, under the title of *deacons*. Theſe were generally younger perſons, of good character, who, if they behaved well in this office, were afterwards advanced to the rank of elders.

At the firſt appointment of officers in chriſtian churches, there was no ſettled proviſion for their maintenance, but money was collected every Lord's day, out of which a diſtribution was made to all who ſtood in need of it, officers and others, promiſcuouſly. For, at the firſt promulgation of chriſtianity, no perſon could have been educated for the miniſtry. All equally lived by their ſeveral profeſſions, and therefore no perſon was entitled to more conſideration in this reſpect than another. But afterwards, when chriſtianity got a firm eſtabliſhment, many young perſons devoted themſelves wholly to the ſervice of chriſtian churches, and prepared themſelves for that work by a diligent ſtudy of the ſcriptures, and proper exerciſes; and thus, giving their whole time and labour to the ſociety, they were, as was reaſonable, wholly maintained out of the funds of it.

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CHAPTER III.

OF THE FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF MANKIND DERIVED FROM REVELATION.

SECTION I.

Of a future ſtate in general.

FROM the light of nature we were able to make out a tolerable ſyſtem of natural religion, as far as it reſpects the *duty of men* in this life, though the particulars were ſuch as can only be ſaid to have been *diſcoverable* by nature, ſince they were not actually *diſcovered* by it. But nature was a much leſs ſufficient guide with reſpect to the information, in which we are ſo much intereſted, concerning our expectations after death. It even left us under great uncertainty, whether we ſhould ſurvive the grave or not; though, upon the ſuppoſition of our ſurviving the grave, we were able, from the conſideration of the equity of God's moral government, to infer, that the event would be very deſirable to good men, and much to be dreaded by the wicked; the former having ſufficient reaſon, from preſent appearances, to conclude,

that the divine being is a friend to virtue, and, therefore, diſpoſed to reward them for their adherence to it; and the latter having equal reaſon to dread his diſpleaſure.

Since, however, no reaſons of juſtice or equity, could lead men to expect more than an *adequate* puniſhment, proportioned to their crimes, there was far from being any reaſon to imagine that future puniſhments would be eternal, eſpecially if they were exquiſite; becauſe no crimes of a finite nature, committed by frail and finite creatures, could deſerve it. An alternative, therefore, remained, either to ſuppoſe an extinction of the wicked, with or without any other puniſhment; or that future ſufferings would operate like the ſufferings of this preſent life, tending to correct and amend thoſe who are ſubject to them.

There was ſome hope, therefore, that, after an adequate puniſhment, thoſe who were not reclaimed in this world, might be effectually cured of their vicious propenſities, by the more ſevere and durable puniſhments of another, ſo as to enter upon a new ſtate of trial with more advantage, though they might ſtill be far behind thoſe who had made the moſt of their preſent advantages. In this caſe, the puniſhments of the wicked may properly enough be ſaid to be eternal, becauſe they would never arrive at that ſtate of perfection and happi-

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neſs which was attained to by thoſe who entered earlier on a courſe of virtue.

Such is the ſubſtance of what we were able to collect from nature concerning a future ſtate, provided there were any ſuch thing. From revelation we learn the actual certainty of a future ſtate, and have an abſolute aſſurance of its being a ſtate of exact retribution, in which every man ſhall receive according to his works. But this being all that is neceſſary to influence our preſent conduct, we are ſtill at a loſs, and left in a great meaſure to our conjectures, with reſpect to the preciſe *nature*, and final *iſſue*, of the future ſtate.

This important revelation of a future life ſeems to have been made to mankind in a gradual manner. At leaſt but little ſtreſs ſeems to have been laid upon it, in the early ages of the world, ſo that it was not fully *brought to light*, ſo as to become the great governing principle of men's conduct, till the diſpenſation of the goſpel of Chriſt.

Enoch being ſaid to have been *a preacher of righteouſneſs*, and having been taken from the world without dying, perhaps in the view of multitudes, it is not very improbable, but that he might have been commiſſioned to announce this great doctrine to mankind. His miraculous aſſumption might be intended to intimate that God, being the friend of the virtuous, would provide for the continuance of their being; and they might conclude, that he

who could continue life without dying, could even raiſe men from the dead.

With the old patriarchs, and mankind in general, in the early ages of the world, the proſpect of being the *founders of nations*, which every perſon had then the chance of being, was ſo great an idea, and ſtruck them ſo forcibly, that it, in a manner, ſuperſeded all other motives to virtue. It is on this argument, therefore, and other temporal conſiderations, that peculiar ſtreſs is laid in the exhortations to obedience addreſſed to them.

As the inſtitutions of Moſes reſpected the Jews as a *nation*, and the immediate object of it was *temporal proſperity*, there is the leſs reaſon to expect a particular mention of it in his laws; though it cannot but be owned to be a little ſurpriſing, that there ſhould be no *incidental mention* of it in any of his writings.

We find ſome alluſions, though not very plain ones, to the ſtate of mankind after death, in ſeveral parts of the Old Teſtament, eſpecially in the book of Pſalms, as, Pſ. xvi. 8. &c. "I have "ſet the Lord always before me: becauſe he is "at my right hand, I ſhall not be moved. "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory re"joiceth: my fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in hope. For "thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell: neither "wilt thou ſuffer thine holy One to ſee cor"ruption. Thou wilt ſhew me the path of life:

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" in thy preſence is fulneſs of joy, at thy right " hand there are pleaſures for evermore." Pſ. xvii. 15. " As for me, I will behold thy face in " righteouſneſs: I ſhall be ſatisfied, when I " awake, with thy likeneſs."

But there ſeems to be very expreſs mention of a future ſtate in the following paſſage of the book of Job, ch. xix. 25. " For I know that my re- " deemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the " latter day upon the earth. And though, after my " ſkin, worms deſtroy this body, yet in my fleſh " ſhall I ſee God; whom I ſhall ſee for myſelf, " and mine eyes ſhall behold, and not another; " though my reins be conſumed within me."

In the book of Daniel there is ſtill a more expreſs mention of a reſurrection, and of the condition of the righteous and of the wicked after it, Dan. xii. 2. " Many of them that ſleep in the " duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to ever- " laſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting " contempt." There ſeems alſo to be a particular promiſe to Daniel of his own reſurrection in the concluding words of the book, v. 13. " But go " thou thy way till the end be: for thou ſhalt " reſt, and ſtand in thy lot at the end of the days." He was then too old to have any more preferment in this life, and he had all the power that a ſubject could have.

In the hiſtory of the Maccabees, who bravely ſuffered death rather than abandon their religion, we ſee the fulleſt confidence in their expectation of a happy reſurrection, eſpecially in what was ſaid by the mother and her ſeven ſons*, at their martyrdom, the particulars of which, being very ſtriking, I ſhall here quote. 2 Mac. vii. 9. &c. "And when he," viz. the ſecond ſon, was at the "laſt gaſp, he ſaid, Thou, like a fury, takeſt us "out of this preſent life, but the King of the "world ſhall raiſe us up, who have died for his "laws, unto everlaſting life." The third, ſpeaking of his tongue and hands, which they were going to mangle, ſaid, ver. 11. "Theſe I had "from heaven; and for his laws I deſpiſe them, "and from him I hope to receive them again." The fourth, when he was ready to die, ſaid, ver. 14. "It is good, being put to death by men, to "look for hope from God, to be raiſed up again "by him: as for thee, thou ſhalt have no re-"ſurrection to life." Laſtly, the mother exhorted them in her own language, ver. 21. ſaying, "I cannot tell how ye came into my womb, for "I neither gave you breath, nor life, neither was "it I that formed the members of every one of

* Though this particular ſtory ſhould be fabulous, it is no leſs an evidence of the opinion that prevailed among the Jews before the time of our Saviour.

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"you; but doubtleſs the Creator of the world, "who formed the generation of man, and found "out the beginning of all things, will alſo, of his "own mercy, give you breath and life again, as "ye now regard not your own ſelves."

The manner in which the belief of a reſurrection is here expreſſed, clearly ſhows, that it was no *novel* doctrine among the Jews of thoſe times, but that they conſidered themſelves as ſpeaking agreeably to the faith of all their anceſtors; and it is hard to conceive how they could have been miſtaken in this. The doctrine of a reſurrection from the dead never occured to any of the heathens, even thoſe who ſuppoſed that there might be a future life. It does not ſeem, therefore, that this general and firm expectation of the Jews, which was peculiar to themſelves, and contrary to all preſent appearances, could have had any other origin than divine revelation, though we have no account when, or to whom, this revelation was made.

This argument, *a poſteriori*, makes it probable, that David, and other writers of the Old Teſtament, did really refer to the doctrine of a reſurrection, and a future life, in thoſe paſſages to which, without the knowledge of what were the ſentiments of the Jews afterwards, we might naturally enough have been led to give a different interpretation. Had there been any new reve-

lation of ſo important a doctrine between the time of David and the Maccabees (as it was a period in which many eminent Jewiſh prophets flouriſhed) we might naturally expect to have found ſome particular account of it. But, ſuppoſing it to have been the univerſal opinion of the patriarchs, founded upon ſome well-known, though very antient revelation, and never to have been forgotten, or loſt ſight of, by the pious Iſraelites (though it was quite loſt with the reſt of the world) we may much better ſatisfy ourſelves with finding ſo little expreſs mention of it.

With the Phariſees, among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, the expectation of a reſurrection was univerſal; though it appears that, in ſome reſpects, they had a very imperfect idea of it, and the Sadducees altogether denied it. Thus Martha, the ſiſter of Lazarus, ſays to our Saviour, when he told her that her brother ſhould riſe again, John xi. 24. "I know that he ſhall riſe again in the reſurrection at the laſt day;" which evidently ſhows, that ſhe took the doctrine for granted, without ſeeming to have learned it from Chriſt.

In all the New Teſtament, we find the greateſt poſſible ſtreſs laid upon this doctrine. Chriſtians having no expectations, as the Jews had, from temporal conſiderations, expected all their reward in a future life. All the recompenſe they looked for, on account of their ſufferings in the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, was *at the reſurrection of the*

the juſt. This, therefore, is the great ſanction of virtue in chriſtianity, which inculcates upon the profeſſors of it, that they are to conſider themſelves as *not of this world*, but as *citizens of heaven*, and only *ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth*, in full aſſurance that, *by patient continuance in well doing*, they ſhall at length, attain to *glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.*

We likewiſe learn, in the goſpel, that Chriſt is appointed both to raiſe all the dead, and to judge the world at the laſt day. Addreſſing himſelf to the Jews, he ſays, John vi. 40. "This is the "will of him that ſent me, that every one who "ſeeth the ſon, and believeth on him, may have "everlaſting life: and I will raiſe him up at the "laſt day." Speaking to Martha, upon the occaſion of the death of Lazarus, he ſays, "I am "the reſurrection, and the life;" and when he was ſolemnly adjured by the high prieſt, at his trial, to ſay whether he was the Chriſt, he ſaid, Mark xiv. 62. "I am, and ye ſhall ſee the ſon of "man ſitting on the right hand of power, and "coming in the clouds of heaven." Our Lord gives a more particular account of the proceedings of this great day. Matt. xxv. 31. "When the "ſon of man ſhall come in his glory, and all the "holy angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon "the throne of his glory. And before him ſhall "be gathered all nations; and he ſhall ſeparate them

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With the Phariſees, among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, the expectation of a reſurrection was univerſal; though it appears that, in ſome reſpects, they had a very imperfect idea of it, and the Sadducees altogether denied it. Thus Martha, the ſiſter of Lazarus, ſays to our Saviour, when he told her that her brother ſhould riſe again, John xi. 24. "I know that he ſhall riſe again in the reſurrection at the laſt day;" which evidently ſhows, that ſhe took the doctrine for granted, without ſeeming to have learned it from Chriſt.

In all the New Teſtament, we find the greateſt poſſible ſtreſs laid upon this doctrine. Chriſtians having no expectations, as the Jews had, from temporal conſiderations, expected all their reward in a future life. All the recompenſe they looked for, on account of their ſufferings in the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, was *at the reſurrection of the*

the juſt. This, therefore, is the great ſanction of virtue in chriſtianity, which inculcates upon the profeſſors of it, that they are to conſider themſelves as *not of this world*, but as *citizens of heaven*, and only *ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth*, in full aſſurance that, *by patient continuance in well doing*, they ſhall at length, attain to *glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.*

We likewiſe learn, in the goſpel, that Chriſt is appointed both to raiſe all the dead, and to judge the world at the laſt day. Addreſſing himſelf to the Jews, he ſays, John vi. 40. "This is the "will of him that ſent me, that every one who "ſeeth the ſon, and believeth on him, may have "everlaſting life: and I will raiſe him up at the "laſt day." Speaking to Martha, upon the occaſion of the death of Lazarus, he ſays, "I am "the reſurrection, and the life;" and when he was ſolemnly adjured by the high prieſt, at his trial, to ſay whether he was the Chriſt, he ſaid, Mark xiv. 62. "I am, and ye ſhall ſee the ſon of "man ſitting on the right hand of power, and "coming in the clouds of heaven." Our Lord gives a more particular account of the proceedings of this great day. Matt. xxv. 31. "When the "ſon of man ſhall come in his glory, and all the "holy angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon "the throne of his glory. And before him ſhall "be gathered all nations; and he ſhall ſeparate them

" them one from another, as a ſhepherd divideth " his ſheep from the goats:" when he will ſay to the righteous, " Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, " inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the " foundation of the world;" but to the wicked he will ſay, " Depart from me, ye curſed, into " everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his " angels."

The reaſon why Chriſt ſhould be appointed by God to act this illuſtrious part, is pretty clearly intimated to be his being *a man*, viz. of the ſame rank and ſpecies with ourſelves, John v. 22. "The " Father judgeth no man; but hath committed " all judgment unto the Son." And, v. 27. " he " hath given him authority to execute judgment " alſo, becauſe he is the ſon of man;" ſo that being, with reſpect to his nature, in all reſpects, like ourſelves, ſubject to the ſame infirmities and paſſions, we may be well aſſured, that he will *feel for us*, and be diſpoſed to make all the reaſonable allowances that our ſituation and circumſtances ſhall require; ſo that we can have no reaſon to complain, or be apprehenſive of unjuſt ſeverity from our judge. For this reaſon, among others, the author of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews obſerves, chap ii. 10. that " it became him, for whom are " all things, and by whom are all things, to " make the captain of our ſalvation perfect through " ſufferings;" ver. 17. " That in all things it " behoved

" behoved him to be made like unto his bre-
" thren;" that he ſhould not be an angel, but
" of the ſeed of Abraham, that he might be a
" merciful and faithful high-prieſt for us."

We are informed that, at the ſecond coming of Chriſt, the virtuous ſhall be raiſed firſt, and immediately after that, a *change*, which ſhall ſuperſede death, will take place upon all who are alive; in conſequence of which, their bodies, as well as thoſe which are raiſed from the dead, will become incorruptible, and not ſubject to die any more. Theſe particulars we are informed of in the following paſſages of ſcripture. 1 Theſſ. iv. 13. " I
" would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,
" concerning them who are aſleep, that ye ſorrow
" not, even as others who have no hope. For if
" we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again, even
" ſo them alſo who ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring
" with him. For this we ſay unto you, by the
" word of the Lord, that we who are alive and re-
" main unto the coming of the Lord, ſhall not
" prevent them who are aſleep. For the Lord
" himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout,
" with the voice of the archangel, and with the
" trump of God: and the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe
" firſt: then we who are alive, and remain, ſhall
" be caught up together with them in the clouds,
" to meet the Lord in the air: and ſo ſhall we
" ever

" ever be with the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 42. "So " alſo is the reſurrection of the dead. It is ſown " in corruption, it is raiſed in incorruption: it " is ſown in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory: " it is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power: it " is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual " body." Ver. 50. " Now this I ſay, brethren, " that fleſh and blood cannot inherit the king- " dom of God; neither doth corruption inherit " incorruption. Behold, I ſhew you a myſtery; " We ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be " changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an " eye, at the laſt trump (for the trumpet ſhall " ſound) and the dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, " and we ſhall be changed. For this corruptible " muſt put on incorruption, and this mortal muſt " put on immortality." Hence we may clearly infer, that all bodily imperfections will be removed, ſo that every perſon will appear with his full powers of body and mind; but whether any will riſe in the ſtate of *infancy*, we are not informed.

SECTION II.

Of the nature of future rewards and punishments.

THE happiness of the righteous, after the resurrection, is expressed in such terms as makes it appear to be the most desirable thing that can be conceived by man; but still the terms are *general*, and give us no distinct idea of the nature of it. Nor, indeed, was this at all necessary: nay, our hopes and wishes are, perhaps, more strongly engaged without that circumstance.

Sometimes the future happiness is described as *a state of rest*. Rev. xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead "that die in the Lord, for they rest from their "labours; and their works do follow them."

But most frequently it is spoken of as a state of *indefinite and positive happiness*. It is said of the virtuous, in the book of Revelation, ch. vii. 16. that "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any "more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor "any heat. For the lamb which is in the midst of "the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them "unto living fountains of waters: and God shall "wipe away all tears from their eyes" Rev. xxi. 3. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, "saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with "men,

" men, and he will dwell with them, and be their " God. And God ſhall wipe away all tears from " their eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, " neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there " be any more pain: for the former things are " paſſed away."

The happineſs of the righteous is alſo repreſented as a ſtate of *glory*, and honourable diſtinction, and that of the wicked as a ſtate of infamy and diſgrace. The angel informs Daniel, ch xii. 2. that " many " of them that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall " awake, ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to " ſhame and everlaſting contempt. And they that " be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the fir- " mament, and they that turn many to righte- " ouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever." To this paſſage our Lord probably alluded, when he ſaid, Matt. xiii. 43. " Then ſhall the righteous " ſhine forth as the ſun, in the kingdom of their " Father."

There can be no doubt but that, as *moral excellence* is the only preparative to future happineſs, ſo it will be a neceſſary ingredient in it. And every truly good man will look forward, with joy, to the time when all ſin, and every propenſity to it, ſhall be no more, and when his nature will be as excellent as it is capable of being.

The happineſs of heaven, like the happineſs of generous virtue in this life, we have reaſon to think,

think, will not be of an indolent, but of an *active* nature; and our benevolence being perfected, we ſhall, probably be employed in promoting the happineſs of other beings; which may engage us in a variety of the moſt vigorous and unremitted purſuits. This idea is favoured by almoſt every repreſentation which our Lord gives us, in his parables, of the rewards of the righteous. Thus, it is uſual with him, to compare it to *a kingdom*, and the exerciſe of *dominion*, in various forms; which ſuggeſts the idea of a ſcene of great *exertion*, as well as of dignity, ſplendor, and authority. He that had improved two talents, was made ruler over two cities; he that had improved five talents, was made ruler over five cities; and to both of them he ſays, Matt. xxv. 21. "Well done, thou "good and faithful ſervant; thou haſt been faith-"ful over a few things, I will make thee ruler "over many things: enter thou into the joy of "thy Lord." Speaking concerning the ſame ſubject, he ſays, Matt. xxiv. 45. "Who then is "a faithful and wiſe ſervant, whom his Lord "hath made ruler over his houſhold, to give them "meat in due ſeaſon? Bleſſed is that ſervant, "whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo "doing. Verily I ſay unto you, that he ſhall "make him ruler over all his goods."

Conſidering the intelligent nature of man, and the pleaſure we naturally take in the acquiſition of know-

knowledge, it can hardly be ſuppoſed, but that an enlarged acquaintance with the works and providence of God, will make a conſiderable part of the happineſs of the wiſe and good hereafter. We ſhall, probably, have the beſt opportunity of gaining a thorough knowledge of the conſtitution, and mutual relations of things in the world that we inhabit; and having it in our power to converſe with the chief actors in all great events, we ſhall be better acquainted with the true hiſtory of the world, and may thereby better trace the wonderful conduct of divine providence in all the affairs of it.

Laſtly, if our natures be at all the ſame that they are now, we ſhall, no doubt, receive the higheſt ſatisfaction from converſing with our wiſe and virtuous acquaintance, talking over the tranſactions in which we were concerned in this world; when all the labours, fatigues, and ſufferings, which we underwent, in the cauſe of virtue and chriſtianity, will, like the recollection of all difficulties ſurmounted in a good cauſe at preſent, be the ſource of great joy and exultation.

That all the virtuous will not be admitted to the ſame degree of honour and happineſs hereafter, is agreeable both to reaſon, and to the ſcriptures, which teach us, that every man ſhall receive "according to his works;" that he who "ſoweth "bountifully, ſhall reap alſo bountifully; but he "that

" that ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap ſparingly." 2 Cor. ix. 6.

On the other hand, the *puniſhment of the wicked* is deſcribed in the ſcriptures, in ſuch a manner, as, if the repreſentation be at all attended to, cannot but alarm our fears to the utmoſt. But ſtill the terms are *general*, and leave us to expect ſome very terrible, but *unknown ſuffering*, and of very long, but uncertain duration.

Not unfrequently, the anguiſh of the mind, which is to be the portion of the wicked after death, is repreſented as derived, in a great degree, from a ſenſe of their *excluſion from* the *happineſs*, to which they ſee the virtuous, who had been the objects of their contempt and abuſe, advanced; and this circumſtance muſt neceſſarily be a very great aggravation of the puniſhment of *hell*, which is the term by which the place of future puniſhment is ſometimes denominated in the ſcriptures. Thus, when the good and virtuous are repreſented as going to a *marriage ſupper*, the wicked are ſaid to be *ſhut out*, and to remain in " outer darkneſs, where " ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth." Matt. xxii. 13. This, alſo, is ſaid to be the fate of the *unprofitable ſervant*, who had neglected to improve his talent, Matt. xxv. 30. and of the *five fooliſh virgins* it is likewiſe ſaid, that, coming too late, they found the door ſhut, and admiſſion refuſed to them.

But

But other accounts of the future ſtate of the wicked, lead us to expect very *ſevere poſitive ſufferings*, as 2 Theſſ. i. 7. "In that day ſhall the "Lord Jeſus be revealed from heaven, with his "mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance "on them that know not God, and that obey not "the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: who ſhall "be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from "the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of "his power."

In ſeveral paſſages of the ſcripture, the ſtate of the wicked after death is deſcribed, as has been hinted before, as a ſtate of *ſhame and diſgrace*, than which nothing is generally more dreaded by mankind; while the righteous are ſaid "not to be "aſhamed before Chriſt at his coming." 1 John ii. 28. And certainly the extreme folly of their conduct muſt appear in a ſtriking and tormenting light to the wicked and profligate, when they ſhall ſee how ſhamefully they have miſapplied their time and talents. And this ſituation will more eſpecially affect thoſe who are uſed to pride themſelves in their cunning and foreſight, when they ſhall ſee how miſerably narrow and ſhort-ſighted all their boaſted ſchemes were. Alſo, how muſt the ſenſe of their own folly be aggravated, by ſeeing thoſe whom they had deſpiſed inheriting the rewards of *true wiſdom*, as well as of virtue, and in knowing that all their baſe views, and low unworthy

worthy purſuits, are no longer concealed within their own breaſts, but laid open to the perfect knowledge of all thoſe to whoſe cenſure they are the moſt ſenſible.

Very many of thoſe expreſſions, by which the fate of the wicked is deſcribed in the ſcriptures, taken in their literal ſenſe, denote utter *deſtruction*, or extinction of being. Thus, the apoſtle Peter ſays, 2 Pet. iii. 7. that "the earth is reſerv-"ed unto fire, againſt the day of judgment, and "perdition of ungodly men;" and in the paſſage quoted above from the Epiſtle of Paul to the Theſſalonians, the puniſhment of the wicked is called "everlaſting deſtruction." If this ſhould actually be the fate of the wicked, their puniſhment may more properly be ſaid to be *eternal*, than upon the former ſuppoſition, there being no reverſion of the ſentence, or remiſſion of the rigour of it.

SECTION III.

Of the duration of future puniſhment.

THE duration of future puniſhment, according to the ſcriptures, as I obſerved before, will be very long, but uncertain; which is the general meaning of that word which we render *everlaſting*; being applied to many things which are expreſsly

expreſsly ſaid to be of limited duration, as the prieſthood of Aaron, and the kingdom in the family of David. For, even if we conſider Chriſt as intended by the ſeed of David, and that the duration of his dominion was foretold in the prophecies, ſtill his kingdom, we are aſſured, will have an end, as we learn, 1 Cor. xv. 24. "Then "cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered "up the kingdom to God, even the Father;— "then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto "him that put all things under him, that God "may be all in all."

There can be no doubt, but that the puniſhment of the wicked will be very awful; but if God be a juſt and righteous governor, it muſt be in proportion to the ſins, by the commiſſion of which it is incurred; and there is no proportion between finite and infinite. Beſides, in the ſcriptures, the divine being appeals to mankind, whether *his ways be not equal*, that is, juſt and reaſonable, Ezekiel xviii. 25. And Abraham takes it for granted, that "the judge of all the earth muſt "do that which is right." Gen. xviii. 25. that is, what is agreeable to our ideas of juſtice and equity. It is, moreover, expreſsly ſaid, Pſ. ciii. 9. that "God keepeth not his anger for ever," that "in judgment he remembereth mercy," and that "he is not extreme to mark iniquity." Theſe expreſſions ſeem to be intended to give us an idea of

of the divine character, and the general maxims of his conduct; and muſt, therefore, reſpect his government in a future world, as well as this. Alſo, whenever the divine juſtice and mercy are compared, the latter is always repreſented as of greater extent than the former. Thus he is ſaid, Ex. xx. 5. "to viſit the iniquity of the fathers upon the "children unto the *fourth generation*, but to ſhew "mercy to *thouſands* of them that love him."

It is remarkable, that the puniſhment of the wicked is always deſcribed in general terms only, expreſſive of great and uncertain ſufferings; whereas, if the doctrine of the *proper eternity* of hell torments had been ſtrictly true, we might have expected, that it would be ſaid, in ſo many words, that *it ſhould have no end*, and that the greateſt ſtreſs ſhould always have been laid upon this moſt important circumſtance, as being moſt intereſting and alarming to all mankind.

Our Saviour, indeed, ſays, Mark ix. 44. that "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not "quenched;" but this is manifeſtly a figurative expreſſion; and, beſides, the words are taken from Iſaiah lxvi. 24. where they are applied to the burning of dead bodies. All the meaning may be, that the fire ſhall not be quenched till it has conſumed that which ſhall be committed to it, ſo as to have anſwered its deſtined end; that is, till thoſe wick-

ed perſons who are doomed to thoſe flames be deſtroyed, or till their vices be thoroughly corrected.

Chriſt alſo ſays of Judas Iſcariot, Matt. xxvi. 24. that "it had been good for him, if he had not "been born." But this, again, is a figurative expreſſion, uſed to denote extreme miſery and diſtreſs in general, eſpecially ſuch as is apt to make men wiſh, from anguiſh of mind and impatience, that they had never been born; which was the caſe with Job, though at the time that he uſed ſuch expreſſions as theſe, Job. iii. it is probable that his ſufferings had been greatly overbalanced by his happineſs.

It muſt likewiſe be allowed to be an argument of conſiderable weight againſt the proper eternity of hell torments, that the number of thoſe who believe and obey the goſpel, and of the virtuous and good in general, who alone are entitled to the happineſs of heaven, is ſometimes repreſented as ſmall, in compariſon with that of the diſobedient and wicked; as when our Saviour ſays, Matt. vii. 13. "Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate; for wide is "the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to "deſtruction, and many there be who go in there-"at: becauſe ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the "way which leadeth unto life, and few there be "that

"that find it*." Now there ſeems to be no way of reconciling this with the notion of divine goodneſs, but upon the ſuppoſition that the wicked will either finally periſh, like plants or fruits which never come to their maturity, or that juſt and ſevere puniſhment will be a means of correcting and improving them. For God, having a perfect fore-knowledge of all that would actually happen, cannot be ſuppoſed to have made a voluntary choice of a ſyſtem, the final iſſue of which he knew would be the everlaſting and inexpreſſible miſery of the greater part of his creatures.

It muſt be allowed, however, that the ſcriptures repreſent the puniſhments of the wicked in a future world, to be exceedingly dreadful, ſo that we have reaſon to be alarmed to the utmoſt extent of our faculties. Even this may ſtagger ſome; but it will not appear inconſiſtent with the uſual government of God, if it be conſidered, to how much anguiſh and diſtreſs many *ſingle acts of ſin and folly* often expoſe us in this life; and, therefore, it is very poſſible, that all the vices of this preſent ſtate may expoſe us to inexpreſſibly greater ſufferings in the life to come.

* It is proper to obſerve, however, that, in the opinion of ſome, this paſſage, and others of a ſimilar turn, do not relate to the final ſtate of mankind in general; but to the ſtate of things at the time when the words were delivered, and to the outward profeſſion of chriſtianity only.

For ſome obſervations on the *moral effect* of the doctrines of the proper eternity, or non-eternity of future puniſhments, I muſt refer my reader to the firſt part of this work. I ſhall only, in this place, ſuggeſt farther, that this, as well as every other great miſtake concerning chriſtianity, is a means of making unbelievers, who will think themſelves juſtified in concluding, without reaſoning or enquiry, that no religion can be true, or come from God, which contains a doctrine ſo manifeſtly unreaſonable and abſurd.

SECTION IV.

Of the time *and* place *of future rewards and puniſhments.*

IT has long been the general opinion of chriſtians, that the reward of the virtuous, and the puniſhment of the wicked, will take place immediately after death, when the ſoul will exiſt in a conſcious ſtate, ſeparate from the body, till the reſurrection. But it appears to me, that the notion of the ſeparate exiſtence of the ſoul, on which this whole doctrine is founded, is built entirely on the falſe philoſophy of the Eaſt, according to which, human ſouls are lapſed angels, fettered in

theſe

theſe groſs bodies; and is by no means favoured by *preſent appearances*, according to which the power of thinking depends entirely upon the body, and eſpecially upon the brain; ſo that any injury being done to the one, a proportionable injury is done to the other.

If thought be ſuſpended in ſound ſleep, and if for a time we be wholly deprived of it by a blow on the head, much more muſt all our faculties be deranged, and a period be put to ſenſation and thought by death. And though *particular texts*, eſpecially as they have been uſually tranſlated, are ſpeciouſly enough alledged in favour of an intermediate conſcious ſtate, juſt as ſingle texts have been, with equal plauſibility, alledged in favour of all the doctrines of Popery and Calviniſm; yet ſcriptural arguments of a more *general nature*, derived from a comprehenſive view of the order and deſign of revelation, which are a much ſurer guide to truth, are ſtrongly concluſive againſt it.

If the ſoul be capable of an exiſtence ſeparate from the body, and, as is generally ſuppoſed by thoſe who adopt this opinion, be capable of a greater exertion of its powers, when unfettered from this incumbrance of the fleſh, what reaſon could there be for a *reſurrection?* The affection, which ſome perſons arbitrarily ſuppoſe, that the ſoul muſt have for its old companion, is abſurd, when it was always a clog and a burden to it.

Alſo, what occaſion was there for *a general judgment*, at the laſt day, which is clearly the ſcripture doctrine, if there will have been a previous ſeparate judgment for every individual of mankind, and they will all have actually received their proper reward or puniſhment before that time; which, with reſpect to ſome of them, will have continued ſeveral thouſand years. Upon this plan, the general judgment muſt be a mere piece of pomp and parade, without any real uſe. Whereas, on the contrary, both the righteous and the wicked are repreſented by our Lord, in his account of the proceedings of that great day, Matt. xxv. as totally ignorant of their future ſtate, and expreſſing their ſurprize at the deciſion of their judge; when, according to this hypotheſis, they could not but have been acquainted with it, by dear or joyful experience, long before.

If we examine the ſcripture *promiſes*, we ſhall find no hint given of any thing taking place to the advantage of good men before *the coming of Chriſt* to judgment. When our Lord encourages perſons to give to the poor, he ſays, Luke xiv. 14. "They cannot recompenſe thee: but thou ſhalt "be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt;" not before. The apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of the duty and expectations of chriſtians, directs their views to the ſame great event, and to nothing before, or ſhort of it. Titus ii. 11. "For the grace

"of

"of God, which bringeth ſalvation, hath appear-
"ed to all men; teaching us, that denying un-
"godlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſo-
"berly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent
"world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the
"glorious appearing of the great God, and our
"Saviour Jeſus Chriſt." The apoſtle Peter had no other idea when he ſaid, 1 Pet. iv. 12. "Be-
"loved, think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery
"trial, which is to try you, as though ſome
"ſtrange thing happened unto you: but rejoice,
"inaſmuch as ye are partakers of Chriſt's ſuffer-
"ings; that when his glory ſhall be revealed, ye
"may be glad alſo with exceeding joy."

The ſame only time of the reward of the righteous, and the puniſhment of the wicked, is alſo particularly mentioned, Rev. xi. 16. where the four and twenty elders are ſaid to fall down upon their faces, and to worſhip God, ſaying, "We
"give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, be-
"cauſe thou haſt taken to thee thy great power,
"and haſt reigned. And the nations were angry,
"and thy wrath is come, and the time of the
"dead that they ſhould be judged, and that thou
"ſhouldeſt give reward unto thy ſervants the pro-
"phets, and to the ſaints, and them that fear
"thy name, ſmall and great, and ſhouldeſt de-
"ſtroy them who deſtroy (or corrupt) the earth."

All the exhortations of the New Teſtament go upon this ſame proper chriſtian principle.

The puniſhment of the wicked is alſo always repreſented as taking place at the ſame time, viz. the day of judgment, and not before. Thus it is only "at the end of the world," Matt. xiii. 14. that our Lord ſays, "the Son of man ſhall ſend "forth his angels;" when "they ſhall gather out "of his kingdom all things that ſhall offend, and "them that do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into "a furnace of fire. "Then," and not before, "ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun, in the "kingdom of their father."

When the apoſtles write to comfort the friends of deceaſed chriſtians, they drop not the moſt diſtant hint of their enjoying any degree of happineſs at preſent, which is a topic which they could not poſſibly have overlooked on ſuch an occaſion, if they had really believed it, even though they had imagined that the reſurrection was ever ſo near at hand. It is plain, however, that the apoſtle Paul had not the notion of the reſurrection being ſo very near, when he wrote the Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, whom he endeavours to comfort upon this occaſion. For, in the ſecond Epiſtle, which, in this reſpect, is only explanatory of the former, he ſpeaks of the riſe, progreſs, and deſtruction of the *man of ſin*, as to take place before this great event.

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On the contrary, all the conſolation that he has to offer, is derived from the proſpect of the joyful reſurrection of their deceaſed friends. 1 Theſſ. iv. 13. "I would not have you to be ignorant, bre- "thren, concerning them which are aſleep, that "ye ſorrow not, even as others who have no hope. "For if we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again, "even ſo them alſo who ſleep in Jeſus, will God "bring with him.—Wherefore, comfort one ano- "ther with theſe words." The very phraſe which the apoſtle here makes uſe of, viz. "ſleep- "ing in Jeſus," clearly implies, that he had no idea of their being awake, alive, and happy.

Beſides, we ſee, in this very paſſage, that the apoſtle was apprehenſive that the perſons to whom he was writing would imagine, that they who ſhould be alive at the ſecond coming of Chriſt, would at leaſt have *ſome advantage* over thoſe who ſhould be raiſed from the dead. For ſo the word φθασωμεν ought to be rendered, and not *prevent*, as in our tranſlation. This ſuſpicion the apoſtle endeavours to obviate, by ſhowing that, of the two, thoſe who had been dead would rather have the advantage of the living; ſince the reſurrection of the dead would precede the change t t was to paſs upon thoſe who ſhould be found alive; and this he relates, as by expreſs revelation fi m Chriſt, ver. 15. "For this we ſay unto you, by "the word of the Lord, that we who are alive,

" and remain unto the coming of the Lord, ſhall " have no advantage over them who are aſleep, " for—the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt. Then " we who are alive, and remain, ſhall be caught " up together with them in the clouds, &c."

Nothing can be more evident, from the conſideration of the whole of this paſſage, than that both the apprehenſions of the Theſſalonians, and the method which the apoſtle takes to ſilence them, go upon the ſuppoſition, that neither he nor they had the leaſt notion of any intermediate ſtate.

I would obſerve, by the way, that by the phraſe *being with Chriſt*, the antients never underſtood any degree of happineſs that could be enjoyed by good men before the reſurrection. For even thoſe chriſtians who, from their leaning to the principles of the oriental or Greek philoſophy, imagined that the ſoul had a ſeparate exiſtence, ſtill ſuppoſed that it continued in Hades till the reſurrection; and, at that time only, upon being united to the body, was taken into heaven, to be with Chriſt. Indeed, our Lord himſelf ſays, John xiv. 3. that he muſt *come again* before he can *receive his diſciples to himſelf*; ſo that the apoſtles could not poſſibly have any expectation of being with Chriſt before that time.

I think it muſt a little embarraſs the advocates for an intermediate ſtate, to conſider how the apoſtle Paul could avoid making mention of it, or alluding

alluding to it, in his long diſcourſe concerning the reſurrection, 1 Cor. xv. when the ſubjects muſt be allowed to have a very near connection; or how he could repreſent the conſequences of diſbelieving the reſurrection to be ſo very great as he deſcribes them; if the ſouls of all good men were, immediately after death, made completely happy with God and Chriſt in heaven. On the other hand, it is plain, from the whole tenor of his writings, that neither he nor the Corinthians had any idea of ſuch an intermediate ſtate; ſince the conſequence of their error was nothing leſs than this, that if there be no reſurrection, both *his preaching* and *their faith* were *altogether vain*, ver. 14. "Alſo "thoſe who were aſleep in Chriſt were periſhed," ver. 18. and "they," the apoſtles, "having no "hope but in this life, were of all men the moſt "miſerable."

Laſtly, our Saviour's argument with the Sadducees, in proof of a reſurrection, from the words of God to Moſes, "I am the God of Abraham, "Iſaac, and Jacob." Matt. xxii. 31. Mark xii. 26. Luke xx. 37. is this, that ſince God is their God, thoſe patriarchs, even now, that they have no life, *live unto him*; that is, they have exiſtence in his ſight, who looks into futurity. For, had they been actually alive, and happy at that very time, it might have been replied, that the promiſe which is implied in God's being *their God*, was

ſufficiently fulfilled without a reſurrection. Indeed his argument might have been thought to be calculated to prove an intermediate ſtate only, had he not expreſsly ſaid, that what he advanced was to prove a reſurrection, *that the dead ſhall ariſe.* He does not ſo much as mention any ſtate of conſcious exiſtence before it; ſo that, from the circumſtances of the diſcourſe, we may ſafely conclude, that he had no idea of any ſuch thing.

It may be ſaid, that our Saviour's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, goes upon the ſuppoſition of there being an intermediate ſtate. But this parable is only a perſonification of what had no real ſenſe; for he does not ſpeak of the ſoul being ſeparate from the body, but of the *whole man*, as having paſſed into the ſtate of death, and therefore mentions the *tongue* of the rich man as tormented in a flame. In the ſame manner, Iſaiah perſonifies the dead king of Babylon, whom he, at the ſame time, ſpeaks of, as conſumed by the worms. Iſa. xiv. 9. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet "thee at thy coming: it ſtirreth up the dead for "thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it "hath raiſed up from their thrones all the kings "of the nations. All they ſhall ſpeak and ſay "unto thee, Art thou alſo become weak as we? "Art thou become like unto us; Thy pomp is "brought down to the grave, and the noiſe of "thy viols: the worm is ſpread under thee, and

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" the worms cover thee." There is alſo an inſtance of a perſonification ſimilar to this in Rev. vi. 9. where the *ſouls of the martyrs* are repreſented as crying to God from under the altar (the place where the blood of ſacrificed victims was poured out) to avenge their blood. But, in other places, *blood* itſelf is repreſented as crying for vengeance.

Our Saviour ſaid to the thief upon the croſs, " This day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe." But this ſaying is too obſcure to found any certain opinion upon. It may only ſignify, that the promiſe was made that day, notwithſtanding his preſent ſtate of humiliation; or, by *paradiſe*, our Lord might mean, the unconſcious ſtate of the virtuous dead, a ſtate of mere reſt, but wherein they are ſecure under the protection of divine benevolence, and reſerved for the accompliſhment of its purpoſes in their favour. The Jews ſuppoſed their *ſheol*, or the ſtate of the dead, to be divided into two regions, viz. *paradiſe* for the good, and *gehenna* for the wicked. See *Windet de Vita functorum Statu*, p. 109.

A paſſage in the Epiſtle of Paul to the Philippians is urged with the greateſt appearance of ſtrength in favour of an intermediate ſtate; but when the whole context is rightly conſidered, it will appear to imply no ſuch thing, as is, I think, ſufficiently proved in Alexander's Diſſertation, prefixed to his Commentary on 1 Cor. xv. The apoſtle, writing

from

from Rome, not long before his death, ſays Phil. i. 21. "To me to live is Chriſt." i. e. Chriſt will be glorified by my labours, and, "to die is gain," as I ſhall then be delivered from a ſtate of perſecution and ſuffering; "but if I live in the fleſh, "this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I ſhall "chooſe, I wot not. For I am in a ſtrait betwixt "two;" or, as it might have been rendered, "I "am ſtraitened by two things," viz. the proſpect of life, or of death. Neither of them are the objects of my choice, "having a deſire to depart, and "to be with Chriſt; which is far better:" wiſhing, if it were poſſible, to be delivered at once from mortality, by the coming of Chriſt, and ſo be immediately with him. That this muſt be the ſenſe of the paſſage is evident from what I have obſerved before, viz. that "being with chriſt," always refers to his ſecond coming, at the reſurrection. "Never-"theleſs," the apoſtle goes on to ſay, "to abide "in the fleſh is more needful for you;" that is, of the two things which are not the objects of my deſire, viz. life or death, more good will accrue to you from the former, and therefore I prefer it.

The ſame conſiderations may alſo help us to the right underſtanding of the ſame apoſtle, in 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are willing rather to be abſent from "the body, and to be preſent with the Lord;" that is, we prefer the future life, which commences at the reſurrection, and in which alone we ſhall be

with

with Chriſt, to the preſent, in which we are abſent from him. He particularly excepts againſt the idea of being *unclothed*, or *naked*, ver. 4. "For we "that are in this tabernacle do groan, being bur- "dened; not that we would be uncloathed, but "cloathed upon, that mortality might be ſwal- "lowed up of life."

Now this being "clothed upon," or, as it is expreſſed, ver. 2. "clothed upon with our houſe "which is from heaven," certainly refers to the bodies which we are to receive at the reſurrection; and, it is evident, from ver. 1. that the apoſtle had no idea of any ſtate between that and the preſent. "For we know, that if our earthly houſe of this "tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building "of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal "in the heavens." And ſince, in the ſleep of death, we cannot be ſenſible of any interval of time, how long ſoever it may really be, the one will ſeem immediately to ſucceed the other; ſo that it will appear to us, that the very next moment after cloſing our eyes in death, we awake at the general reſurrection, which is a moſt ſublime and alarming conſideration.

Other *ſingle paſſages* of ſcripture are produced in favour of the doctrine of an intermediate ſtate, but none ſo plauſibly as theſe, and with me they weigh nothing againſt the force of the *general arguments* above-mentioned.

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As to the *place* where the virtuous, or the vicious will be diſpoſed of after death, it is abſolutely unknown to us, eſpecially the latter; for, as to the former, the apoſtle Peter ſeems to intimate, that good men will inhabit this earth after it has been deſtroyed by fire, and been made habitable again in a more advantageous form, 2 Peter iii. 7. "The heavens and the earth which are now, are "reſerved unto fire, againſt the day of judgement, "and perdition of ungodly men." Ver. 10. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the "night, in which the heavens ſhall paſs away "with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt "with fervent heat, the earth alſo, and the works "that are therein, ſhall be burnt up." Ver. 13. "Nevertheleſs we, according to his promiſe, look "for new heavens and a new earth, wherein "dwelleth righteouſneſs."

As the apoſtle ſays, that "the earth is reſerved "unto fire againſt the day of judgment, and per-"dition of ungodly men;" it ſhould ſeem, that the deſtruction of this world by fire, is to have ſome connection with the puniſhment of the wicked; and may, perhaps, be the immediate inſtrument of it. If this be the caſe, there will be ſomething more than figurative in the deſcription of the torments of the wicked in the ſcriptures, as cauſed by *fire*, and this fire may terminate in the utter extinction

tinction of the wicked. But theſe, it muſt be acknowledged, are mere conjectures.

A learned friend, being diſſatisfied with the preceding interpretation of the paſſage in the Epiſtle to the Philippians, has ſuggeſted another, which, to gratify my readers, I ſhall here inſert.

I freely own, that I am not ſatisfied with this explanation of Phil. i. 21. firſt, becauſe the apoſtle does not appear to me to write under any depreſſion, but rather with triumph and exultation, ver. 20. "According to my earneſt expectation, "and my hope, that in nothing I ſhall be aſhamed, "but that, with all boldneſs, as always, ſo now "alſo Chriſt ſhall be magnified in my body, whe-"it be by life or by death."

Secondly, the apoſtle does not ſeem to have conſidered the two things by which he ſays he was ſtraitened as *evil*, but rather as *good*, and both of them as objects of earneſt choice; ſo good, that his difficulty was, which to prefer, whether to live to Chriſt, i. e. for the furtherance of the goſpel, and the ſalvation of his fellow-creatures through him, which had long been the object of his ardent wiſhes, and earneſt cares and labours, or to die and be with Chriſt, which would be a gain to himſelf, and far better for his perſonal intereſt. From the whole preceding context, from ver. 12. the apoſtle appears to have had, at the time of writing, no painful feelings of what he had already ſuffered, either from

from the malice of open enemies, or treachery of falſe friends, nor formidable apprehenſions of what might yet await him. He rather expreſſes a quite different ſtate of mind in thoſe words, ver. 18. "And I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice;" a ſtate of mind pretty much ſimilar to that which he profeſſed to the elders of Epheſus, Acts xx. 22. ——24.

However, I not do think it will follow, that the apoſtle meant by the words, *to die is gain*, and *to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better*, to convey an idea of a ſtate of *conſciouſneſs* and *poſitive happineſs*, which he ſhould enjoy with Chriſt from the inſtant of his death till the reſurrection. It is enough to juſtify the expreſſions, and his deſire to depart, if we only ſuppoſe him to mean, that he ſhould not only be exempted from farther danger, ſuffering, oppoſition, and treachery from others, but alſo from care, ſolicitude, and apprehenſions in himſelf about his own eternal intereſts, which he ſo pathetically expreſſes, chap. iii. 8——14. and and 1 Cor. ix. 27. and elſewhere; that from thenceforth he and his intereſts would be in *ſecurity* under the faithful protection of a powerful Saviour. He would be with Chriſt in the ſame ſenſe as Chriſt promiſed to the penitent thief, that he ſhould be with him that day in paradiſe, i. e. in the ſtate of thoſe dead, who are, as it were, within the incloſure of divine benevolence and power, reſerved for

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the accompliſhment of divine purpoſes and promiſes. Now ſurely, to be admitted to ſuch a ſtate of ſecurity, is a proper object of deſire to a good mind, even preferably to the continuance of an uſeful life, but expoſed to fears, dangers, and ſufferings, both from within and without.

This alſo ſeems conformable to the apoſtles ſentiments and expreſſions on other occaſions, 2 Tim. iv. 6——8. "I am now ready to be offered, and "the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I "have kept the faith. Henceforth," he does not ſay, I ſhall be happy with Chriſt, but "there "is laid up (ἀπόκειται) for me a crown of "righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous "judge, ſhall give me at that day;" and chap. i. 12. of the ſame Epiſtle, "I know whom I have "believed, and I am perſuaded that he is able" (not to make me happy with himſelf immediately, but) "to keep that which I have committed unto "him againſt that day.". I conceive, that the apoſtle means to convey the ſame ſentiment, that the lives and happineſs of his diſciples are intruſted to the care and protection of Chriſt, to be by him reſtored and perfected at the laſt day, in thoſe words, Coloſ. iii. 3. 4. "For ye are dead," (a figure by no means too ſtrong to denote, not only the ſpiritual profeſſions, but the hazardous circumſtances of chriſtians at that time) "and your life

"is

" is hid with Chriſt in God. When Chriſt, who " is our life, ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo ap- " pear with him in glory." The ſame ſentiment ſeems alſo to be couched under, and an attention to it throws a beautiful and ſtrong light on, that otherwiſe obſcure paſſage, 1 Theſ. iv. 14. " Even " ſo them alſo which ſleep in Jeſus, will God " bring with him;" intimating, that they are already committed to him by God as a depoſit or truſt, and that God will then bring them with him, that he may accompliſh the purpoſes of the truſt.

The apoſtle ſeems to have borrowed theſe ſentiments and modes of expreſſion, on the ſubject of the ſecurity of dead chriſtians, as reſerved in the hands, and under the protection of Chriſt unto a glorious reſurrection, from the words of Chriſt himſelf, John vi. 39. " This is the Father's will " which hath ſent me, that of all which he hath " given me I ſhould loſe nothing, but ſhould raiſe " it up again at the laſt day;" and ch. x. 28, 29. " I give unto them eternal life, and they ſhall " never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out " of my hand. My father which gave them me, " is greater than all; and none is able to pluck " them out of my Father's hand." Hence we ſee the reaſon and propriety of dying Stephen's invocation, Acts vii. 59. " Lord Jeſus, receive my " ſpirit."

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Upon the whole, by *being with Chriſt*, the apoſtle ſeems to me to mean being in a ſtate of ſecurity with him, under the protection of divine power, and the ſanction of his faithful promiſe, reſerved as a truſt or depoſit committed to them both by God and ourſelves, in order to be reſtored to life, and made completely happy by him at the reſurrection of the juſt.

SECTION V.

Of the future condition of the world in general.

THE great events of the reſurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, and a ſtate of retribution afterwards, are ſuch as all mankind are moſt nearly intereſted in, as *individuals*. But there are, likewiſe, other *intermediate events*, which are foretold with ſufficient clearneſs in the ſcriptures, in which we are intereſted as *members of civil ſocieties*, or, at leaſt, as well wiſhers to the cauſe of chriſtianity and virtue in the world. Of theſe I ſhall briefly mention a few, that are the moſt conſiderable.

The power of *antichriſt*, mentioned by different names in ſeveral parts of the ſcriptures, by which almoſt all interpreters underſtand the uſurpations of

of the pope of Rome, is to be finally overthrown. Several different ſteps are to be taken in order to the reduction of this enormous power, as is moſt probably the meaning of the *ſeven vials*, which are ſaid, in the book of Revelation, to be poured, in ſucceſſion, upon the *beaſt*, which is ſynonymous to antichriſt. And ſince it is evident, from the ſtate of the world, that the papal power has long been upon the decline, we may conclude, that ſeveral of theſe vials are already poured out.

But the utter deſtruction of antichriſt ſeems to be reſerved for a more remarkable period, which is often denominated in the ſcriptures by *the coming of Chriſt*, as was alſo perhaps the period in which Jeruſalem was deſtroyed; ſo that probably this coming alſo will not be a literal one, but figurative, repreſenting a moſt eminent judicial proceeding, in the exertion of that *power in heaven and in earth*, which was given to Chriſt after his reſurrection. The apoſtle ſays, of this *man of ſin* (by which there can be no doubt of the ſame antichriſt power being intended) that the Lord ſhall "conſume him with the ſpirit of his mouth, and deſtroy him with the brightneſs of his coming." 2 Theſſ. ii. 8.

The ſame coming of Chriſt ſeems to be deſcribed by the apoſtle John, in the book of the Revelation, in ſuch a manner, as to lead us to conclude, that the powers of this world will make a vio-

a violent, but ineffectual oppoſition to this event; and that when it has taken place, chriſtianity, then reſtored to a ſtate of great purity, by the deſtruction of the power which had introduced and ſupported the corruptions of it, will prevail through the whole world, for a ſpace which in the prophetic language, is called *a thouſand years.*

Nothing leſs than this can be denoted by the reign of Chriſt upon earth, and the reſurrection of the martyrs, and others who oppoſed the antichriſtian corruptions of the goſpel, to live and reign with him, in the following paſſage. Rev. xix. 11. "And I ſaw heaven opened, and behold, a white "horſe; and he that ſat upon him was called "faithful and true, and in righteouſneſs he doth "judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame "of fire, and on his head were many crowns; "and he had a name written that no man knew "but he himſelf: And he was clothed with a veſ- "ture dipped in blood: and his name is called, "The Word of God. And the armies which "were in heaven followed him upon white horſes, "clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And "out of his mouth goeth a ſharp ſword, that with "it he ſhould ſmite the nations: and he ſhall rule "them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the "winepreſs of the fierceneſs and wrath of Al- "mighty God.—And I ſaw the beaſt, and the kings

" kings of the earth, and their armies gathered to-
" gether to make war againſt him that ſat on the
" horſe, and againſt his army. And the beaſt
" was taken, and with him the falſe prophet that
" wrought miracles before him, with which he
" deceived them that had received the mark of the
" beaſt, and them that worſhipped his image.
" Theſe both were caſt alive into a lake of fire
" burning with brimſtone.—And I ſaw an angel
" come down from heaven, having the key of the
" bottomleſs pit, and a great chain in his hand.
" And he laid hold on the dragon, that old ſer-
" pent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound
" him a thouſand years. And caſt him into the
" bottomleſs pit, and ſhut him up, and ſet a ſeal
" upon him, that he ſhould deceive the nations no
" more till the thouſand years ſhould be fulfilled:
" and after that he muſt be looſed a little ſeaſon.
" And I ſaw thrones, and they ſat upon them:
" and judgment was given unto them: and I ſaw
" the ſouls of them that were beheaded for the
" witneſs of Jeſus, and for the word of God, and
" who had not worſhipped the beaſt, neither his
" image, neither had received his mark upon their
" foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and
" reigned with Chriſt a thouſand years. But the
" reſt of the dead lived not again until the thou-
" ſand years were finiſhed. This is the firſt re-
" ſurrection. Bleſſed and holy is he that hath part

" in

" in the firſt reſurrection: on ſuch the ſecond " death hath no power, but they ſhall be prieſts " of God, and of Chriſt, and ſhall reign with " him a thouſand years."

Some have ſuppoſed that Chriſt himſelf will reign in perſon upon earth, and that the martyrs will actually riſe from the dead and live with him; but conſidering the figurative language of prophecy, it is more probable, that the revival of the *cauſe* for which they ſuffered is, in reality, the thing denoted by it. Beſides, it is contrary to the clear ſenſe of many paſſages of ſcripture, that any perſons, however diſtinguiſhed by their virtues, or ſufferings, ſhould receive their reward before the great day of judgment, after the general reſurrection. Dr. Whitby has alſo advanced other very ſufficient arguments againſt the literal interpretation of the millenium, which was adopted by ſome of the antients, and, with ſome variations, hath been patronized by ſeveral modern divines, eſpecially Mr. Joſeph Mede, and biſhop Newton.

The circumſtance which makes this paſſage look the moſt like the literal deſcription of an event is its being ſaid, that " the reſt of the dead ſhall not " live again till thoſe thouſand years be ended." But if the reſurrection of the martyrs may only denote the revival of their *cauſe*, the *reſt of the dead*, may ſignify their enemies, and their reſurrection may denote the recovery of their power alſo.

As a *day* in the prophetical language is generally, and I think very juſtly, ſuppoſed to ſtand for a *year*, I do not ſee why we ſhould not follow the ſame rule in the interpretation of theſe thouſand years; as it ſeems to me that nothing but the very great length of that period has induced interpreters to acquieſce in the literal ſenſe. But it ſhould be conſidered, in favour of the figurative interpretation, that, with reſpect to knowledge, and improvements of all kinds, the world is yet but in its infancy, and will probably continue to be ſo ſeveral centuries more. Even the extent of it is not yet known; the greateſt part, and perhaps the very beſt part of it, is yet in a manner uninhabited; and far the greateſt part abſolutely uncivilized: not to ſay that even the beſt policied ſtates abound with ſo many abſurd inſtitutions, by which *the many* are miſerably enſlaved by *the few* (which is ſo unfavourable to the happineſs of the whole) that, compared with what human ſociety is naturally capable of, they hardly deſerve to be termed better than barbarous.

Now, if we conſider how very ſlowly mankind has advanced in political, and all kinds of improvements, how gradual has been the progreſs of all diſcoveries in ſcience, and of excellence in the arts, we can hardly imagine (though this progreſs be evidently more rapid at preſent than it has been in any former age of the world, and though there is no reaſon to apprehend any more great interruptions

tions in valuable improvements, and therefore we may expect them to go on with an accelerated progreſs) that a thouſand years can be ſufficient to bring the preſent ſyſtem of the world, and the preſent race of mankind, to any thing like what may be called their *mature ſtate*; and till this be attained, it cannot but appear improbable, that an end ſhould be put to their exiſtence. And, allowing a period of *manhood*, in proportion to this long *infancy* of the human ſpecies, three hundred and ſixty thouſand years will not be deemed a diſproportioned age of the world.

As to the fabulous tradition of the Jews, that the world is to continue ſeven thouſand years, viz. four thouſand before the Meſſiah, two thouſand more before the millenium, and one thouſand afterwards, which ſeems to have weighed much with biſhop Newton and others; beſides, that it cannot be pretended to have any other than Rabinical authority, it appears upon the very face of it, ſo very idle and chimerical, that I wonder it ſhould have met with any regard from chriſtians.

That the Jews ſhall return to their own country, about the time of the commencement of the millenium; that they ſhall poſſeſs it many years in peace, and be a very flouriſhing nation, ſeem to be moſt diſtinctly foretold in many prophecies of the Old Teſtament, which plainly refer to a return of this people, after a much longer, and more complete diſperſion of them, than that which attended

the Babyloniſh captivity. Beſides, ſeveral of theſe prophecies were delivered after their return from Babylon, and therefore muſt refer to another return, ſubſequent to it, and which therefore has not yet taken place. Alſo the reſtoration of the ten tribes of Iſrael is ſpoken of, as well as that of Judah; and the ten tribes cannot be ſaid to have returned from captivity at all yet. In proof of this I ſhall recite a few of the more expreſs of theſe prophecies, by which it will alſo appear, that this nation is ſtill to be diſtinguiſhed by God, and to be the medium of his communications to the reſt of the world.

Jer. xxx. 3. "For lo, the days come, ſaith "the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity "of my people Iſrael and Judah, ſaith the Lord, "and I will cauſe them to return to the land that "I gave to their fathers, and they ſhall poſſeſs it." Ver. 10. "Therefore, fear not thou, O my ſer-"vant Jacob, ſaith the Lord, neither be diſmay-"ed, O Iſrael; for lo, I will ſave thee from afar, "and thy ſeed from the land of their captivity, "and Jacob ſhall return, and ſhall be in reſt and "quiet, and none ſhall make him afraid. For I "am with thee, ſaith the Lord, to ſave thee: "though I make a full end of all the nations "whither I have ſcattered thee, yet will I not "make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee "in meaſure."

The

The calamities of the Jewiſh nation are to bear but a ſmall proportion to their proſperity after their return from their laſt captivity, with reſpect to its greatneſs, or duration, as we may infer from Iſ. liv. 7, 8. "For a ſmall moment have I forſaken "thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a "moment; but with everlaſting kindneſs will I "have mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy re-"deemer." If there be any truth in this repreſentation, what we call the *millenium*, muſt be of much more than a thouſand years duration. For, the deſolation of Judea has now continued more than one thouſand ſeven hundred years. For this period to appear wholly inſignificant, as we are here taught to conclude it will be, with reſpect to the flouriſhing ſtate of that country, the latter muſt be of great extent indeed.

Zechariah, who wrote after the return of the Jews from Babylon, diſtinctly points out the ſame event, intimating, with many other prophets, that it will be attended with great calamities to thoſe nations who ſhall oppoſe the ſettlement of the Jews in their own country, and alſo that they will bitterly repent of their ſin in murdering Chriſt.

Zech. xii. 6. "In that day will I make the "governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among "the wood, and like a torch of fire in a ſheaf; "and they ſhall devour all the people round about,

"on the right hand and on the left: and Jeruſa-
" lem ſhall be inhabited again, in her own place.
" —And it ſhall come to paſs in that day, that I
" will ſeek to deſtroy all the nations that come
" againſt Jeruſalem. And I will pour upon the
" houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Je-
" ruſalem, the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplications,
" and they ſhall look upon *him** whom they have
" pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him, as one
" that mourneth for his only ſon, and ſhall be in
" bitterneſs for him, as one that is in bitterneſs for
" his firſt-born.

Daniel alſo diſtinctly foretells the ſame event, and he ſeems to connect it with the deſtruction of a power, which, from his deſcription of its riſe and progreſs, moſt interpreters conclude muſt mean the Turkiſh, which has ſo long been in poſſeſſion of the Holy Land. Whenever, therefore, this ſignal event ſhall take place (which is likewiſe, probably, denoted by the pouring out of the ſixth vial in the book of the Revelation) we may be looking forward for ſome other very great and glorious events, but which will be preceded by ſome very calamitous ones, reſpecting almoſt all the known world, as the following prophecy, together with others in the Revelation, plainly intimates.

* For the authority of this reading, ſee *Mr. Eyre's Obſervations on the Prophecies relating to the Reſtoration of the Jews.*

Dan.

Dan. xi. 40. "And at the time of the end, "ſhall the king of the ſouth (the Saracens) puſh "at him (the Roman empire) and the king of the "north (the Turks) ſhall come againſt him like a "whirlwind, with chariots, and with horſemen, "and with many ſhips, and he ſhall enter into the "countries, and ſhall overflow and paſs over. He "ſhall enter alſo into the glorious land, and many "countries ſhall be overthrown: but theſe ſhall "eſcape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, "and the chief of the children of Ammon. He "ſhall ſtretch forth his hand alſo upon the coun-"tries, and the land of Egypt ſhall not eſcape. "But he ſhall have power over the treaſures of "gold and of ſilver, and over all the precious "things of Egypt: and the Libyans, and the "Ethiopians ſhall be at his ſteps. But tidings "out of the eaſt, and out of the north ſhall trou-"ble him: therefore, he ſhall go forth with great "fury to deſtroy, and utterly to make away many. "And he ſhall plant the tabernacles of his palace "between the ſeas, in the glorious holy moun-"tain: yet he ſhall come to his end, and none "ſhall help him. And at that time ſhall Michael "ſtand up, the great prince who ſtandeth for the "children of thy people, and there ſhall be a time "of trouble, ſuch as never was ſince there was a "nation, even to that ſame time: and at that

" time thy people ſhall be delivered, every one that " ſhall be found written in the book."

That great calamitous events await the preſent governments of Europe, ſeems to be ſufficiently evident without a ſpirit of prophecy. " The ſtate " of Europe," as Dr. Hartley obſerves (ſee his Obſervations on Man. vol. ii. p. 455.) is ſo particularly " critical and alarming, that hardly any " thing leſs than univerſal confuſion muſt be the " conſequence; and if famine and peſtilence " ſhould accompany civil commotions, it will in- " deed be a time of trouble, as Daniel ſays, ſuch " as was never known before."

The preſent kingdoms of Europe are unqueſtionably repreſented by the feet and toes of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar ſaw in his prophetical dream; and upon the feet of this image will fall the ſtone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which repreſents the kingdom to be ſet up by Chriſt, and which, after daſhing in pieces the whole image, will itſelf become a great mountain, filling the whole earth. From Daniel's interpretation of this viſion it may be clearly inferred, that the forms of government, eccleſiaſtical and civil, which now ſubſiſt in Europe, muſt be diſſolved; but that ſomething very different from them, and greatly ſuperior to them, more favourable to the virtue and happineſs of mankind, will take place in their ſtead. That this is the meaning of the prophecy

prophecy can hardly be doubted by any perſon who ſhall give the leaſt attention to it. Dan. ii. 44. "And in the days of theſe kings ſhall the God of "heaven ſet up a kingdom which ſhall never be "deſtroyed: and the kingdom ſhall not be left to "other people, but it ſhall break in pieces, and "conſume all theſe kingdoms, and it ſhall ſtand "for ever."

When the prophetical thouſand years above-mentioned ſhall be expired, we are informed, by the ſame ſpirit of prophecy, that there will be another prevalence of infidelity and wickedneſs, which will bring on the laſt criſis and final diſſolution of the world. The following is the prophetical deſcription of this great event. Rev. xx. 7. "And "when the thouſand years are expired, Satan ſhall "be looſed out of his priſon, and ſhall go out to "deceive the nations, which are in the four quar-"ters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather "them together to battle: the number of whom "is as the ſand of the ſea. And they went up on "the breadth of the earth, and compaſſed the "camp of the ſaints about, and the beloved city: "and fire came down from God out of heaven, "and devoured them. And the devil that de-"ceived them was caſt into the lake of fire and "brimſtone, where the beaſt and the falſe prophet "are, and ſhall be tormented day and night for

"ever and ever. And I ſaw a great white throne,
"and him that ſat on it, from whoſe face the earth
"and the heaven fled away, and there was found
"no place for them. And I ſaw the dead, ſmall
"and great, ſtand before God; and the books
"were opened: and another book was opened,
"which is the book of life: and the dead were
"judged out of thoſe things which were written in
"the books, according to their works. And the
"ſea gave up the dead which were in it; and
"death, and the grave delivered up the dead
"which were in them: and they were judged
"every man according to their works.——And I
"ſaw a new heaven and a new earth: for the firſt
"heaven and the firſt earth were paſſed away."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

SECTION I.

Of other intelligent beings beſides man.

WE learn from the ſcriptures, that other intelligent beings, beſides men, have had occaſional intercourſe with this world. *Angels* are particularly ſpoken of as the meſſengers of God to the patriarchs and prophets, and are alſo ſaid to have been the inſtruments which he has employed in the diſtribution of his bleſſings or judgments. Thus, an angel was ſent to reſcue Lot, Gen. xix. and to announce the birth of Samſon, Jud. xiii. One whoſe name we are told is *Michael*, is ſaid, Dan. x. 13. to be "one of the chief princes;" and, ch. xii. 1. "the great prince who ſtandeth for the "children of Iſrael." The ſame is called the *archangel*, Jude ix. Another, whoſe name is called *Gabriel*, interpreted two viſions to the prophet Daniel, ch. viii. 16. ix. 21. The ſame alſo appeared to Mary, to announce to her the conception of Jeſus.

What rank theſe beings hold with reſpect to intellectual power, is altogether unknown to us;

for we can by no means infer, from their being immediately employed by God, that they are naturally endued with any extraordinary ſhare of underſtanding. This, at leaſt, we are not led to infer, from the choice which God has thought proper to make of prophets of the human race. Indeed, his own wiſdom was often rendered the more conſpicuous by their weakneſs. Nor is their employment an abſolute proof of ſuperior goodneſs.

It muſt be allowed, however, that, conſidering angels as being in a higher, and ourſelves in a lower ſtation, it was not unnatural to imagine, that they were much ſuperior to us in power, wiſdom, virtue, and happineſs. Accordingly, we find the woman who applied to Joab, 2 Sam. xiv. 17, 20. ſpeaking of angels as poſſeſſed of extraordinary wiſdom, "knowing all things that are in the earth;" and having the moſt perfect diſcernment of characters; and Achiſh, a king of the Philiſtines, 1 Sam. xxix. 9. compares the innocence of David to that of an angel. Alſo David himſelf ſpeaks of the angels as *excelling in ſtrength*, Pſ. ciii. 20.

If it be true, that ſome of theſe angels have ſinned, ſo as to have been caſt out of heaven, and to continue ſtill abandoned to impiety, making it their buſineſs to ſeduce mankind, and taking pleaſure in doing them all kinds of injury (though, not knowing their ſituation, we cannot judge completely of their temptation, yet) we can hardly imagine,

gine, that they could have had much greater ſtrength of mind than men are generally poſſeſſed of, or have had originally a diſpoſition more favourable to virtue.

This fall of angels, I muſt own, however, appears to me to be very problematical; and though it cannot be ſaid that the thing is abſolutely impoſſible, it ſeems, upon the face of it, to be very improbable. Beſides, if ſuch exalted beings as theſe are ſuppoſed to have ſinned, and have thereby become obnoxious to the divine diſpleaſure, what end could it anſwer to them to be aſſiduous in ſeducing mankind? Indeed, upon the ſuppoſition, that their exiſtence and torments were to be everlaſting, it may be conceived to give them a gloomy kind of ſatisfaction, to have *brethren in iniquity* for their companions in their ſufferings. But this idea of never-ending puniſhments, reſpecting any order of beings, as well as men, has, I apprehend, been ſhewn to be unreaſonable and abſurd.

The language of the ſcriptures is often highly figurative, which may account for the unknown *principle*, or *ſource of evil*, being perſonified in them, ſo as to be called *Satan* in Hebrew, and *Devil*, διαβολος, in Greek; but whatever is actually aſcribed to this being, will appear, if we conſider the circumſtances of the ſeveral narrations, to be derived from nothing but the irregular paſſions of men, which

which are, of themſelves, a cauſe abundantly adequate to the effect.

Indeed, the manner in which the ſacred writers ſpeak of the vices of thoſe men, who are ſaid to have been actuated by this evil principle, plainly enough intimates, that they did not, in reality, conſider their guilt as ſhared with them by any other being who prompted and ſeduced them. Nay, the very contrary doctrine is ſtrongly aſſerted by the apoſtle James, who ſays, ch. i. 14. "But "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away "of his own luſt, and enticed." When our Lord ſaid to Peter, on his ſuggeſting that his ſufferings were unworthy of him, Matt. xvi. 23. "Get "thee behind me, Satan," the very indignation with which he ſpake, ſhows that he conceived the ſuggeſtion to have ariſen only from Peter himſelf, who, in this caſe was his Satan or adverſary, as oppoſing the great purpoſes which were to be anſwered by his death. And, ſurely, the ſtrong affection which Peter appears to have had for Jeſus, joined with the narrowneſs of his views, may eaſily be ſuppoſed to account for his language. In like manner, all that may really be meant by Jeſus being *tempted by the devil*, Matt. iv. may be, that the improper thoughts mentioned in the courſe of the narrative, either occurred to himſelf in his private meditations, or were ſuggeſted by ſome other perſon.

When

When Satan is ſaid to have ſtirred up David to number the people of Iſrael, 1 Chr. xxi. 1. the thought may, in fact, have ariſen from his own pride only, which being evil, is therefore aſcribed to Satan; and it is remarkable, that the very ſame ſcheme is by another hiſtorian, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. aſcribed to God, becauſe the purpoſes of his providence were finally anſwered by it. So alſo *the evil ſpirit from the Lord*, which is ſaid to have troubled Saul, 1 Sam. xvi. 14. was probably nothing but his own melancholy, or ill-humour, which was relieved by muſic.

All that may be meant by the "fire of hell "being prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. may be, that this puniſhment was originally appointed for the deſtruction of all evil, and the inſtruments of evil; nor can this language, with this conſtruction, be ſaid to be more figurative than that of John, who ſays, that "death and hell "were caſt into the lake of fire." Rev. xx. 14.

As to the *demoniacs* mentioned in the New Teſtament, it is pretty evident, that their diſorder was ſome ſpecies of madneſs, or lunacy, which, in the time of our Saviour, was uſually aſcribed, by Heathens as well as Jews, to the malignant influence, not of the *devil*, but of *demons*, or the ſouls of evil diſpoſed perſons, which were imagined to range about the earth, and to delight in miſchief, an abſurd and unphiloſophical notion, but which it was not our Saviour's buſineſs to correct.

The

The only ſtory of this kind which is not pretty eaſy to be explained by this hypotheſis, is that in which *a legion of demons* is ſaid to have gone out of two men into a herd of ſwine, Matt viii. 28. Mark v. 1. Luke viii. 26. But if the ſwine only happened to be drowned about the ſame time that the two men were cured, it might have been ſufficient to give riſe to the ſtory; which, it is to be obſerved, is not related by any perſon who was preſent at the tranſaction; Matthew not being called to follow Chriſt till after his return from this excurſion beyond the ſea of Galilee; ſo that there was ſufficient room for exaggeration and miſtake. Or, which I think moſt probable, the madneſs of theſe men might be transferred to the ſwine.

Much miſtake, with reſpect to this ſubject, ſeems to have been occaſioned by the ambiguity in the meaning of the words *ſatan*, *angel**, and *devil*, which ſignify reſpectively, *adverſary*, *meſſenger*, and *accuſer*. Thus the *angels that ſinned*, 2 Peter ii. 4. and Jude 6. may mean the meſſengers who were ſent from the wilderneſs to ſpy out the land of Canaan, as the author of *the ſcripture meaning of the word Satan* has ingeniouſly conjectured, or it may refer to his hiſ-

* It is not unuſual with the ſacred writers to call even the unconſcious inſtruments of God's pleaſure, ſuch as natural cauſes, &c. *angels*, Pſ. civ. 4. "Who maketh the wind his angels, and "flaming fire his miniſters." For ſo it may with moſt propriety be rendered.

tory,

tory of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, for their rebellion againſt Moſes, were deſtroyed by the earth opening and ſwallowing them up. Indeed, the common interpretation of theſe paſſages is not agreeable to the conſtant tenor of the ſcriptures, in which no more than *one devil*, or Satan, is ever mentioned.

When *the devil* is ſaid "to go about like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. the beſt interpreters ſuppoſe that Nero, or ſome other known adverſary, or accuſer, is intended. Alſo, when St. Paul ſays, that "he deſired "to do" a certain thing "again and again, but "that ſatan hindered him," 1 Theſſ. ii. 10. he might mean any human adverſary, or ſome of his friends, influenced by worldly conſiderations.

Theſe are only a few general hints upon the ſubject, nor do I know that any of them are peculiar to myſelf; but they appear to me to throw conſiderable light upon the ſubject, and to remove ſome difficulties from the ſcheme of revelation, which, I hope, will recommend them to others as well as to myſelf.

SEC.

SECTION II.

Of abſtinence from blood.

THE queſtion concerning the lawfulneſs of eating blood, ought to have been conſidered under the head of precepts that are not of a moral nature; but, as it is a ſubject of much leſs importance than the reſt, and of a more doubtful nature, I have thought proper to reſerve the diſcuſſion of it to this Appendix, in which I ſhall endeavour to do juſtice to the arguments on both ſides.

The prohibition to eat blood, given to Noah, ſeems to be obligatory on all his poſterity; and as it accompanied the firſt expreſs grant of animal food, it ſeems to be reſerved, by way of acknowledgment to God, as the giver of life, and of the food which ſupports it. Alſo this reſpect paid to blood, which is ſhed when animals are killed for food, and which is the moſt apparent *vehicle of life*, may be intended to inculcate a reſpect for *life*, as the moſt valuable gift of God, and to warn us not to deprive any animal of it, and much leſs man, without neceſſity.

It is obſervable, that the awful denunciation of the judgment of God againſt murder, immediately follows

follows the prohibition to eat blood, as if it had been underſtood that they had ſome connection. Gen. ix. 3. "Every moving thing that liveth "ſhall be meat for you; even as the green herb "have I given you all things; but fleſh with the "life thereof, which is the blood thereof, ſhall you "not eat. And ſurely your blood of your lives "will I require: at the hand of every beaſt will I "require it, and at the hand of man, at the hand "of every man's brother will I require the life of "man. Whoſo ſheddeth man's blood, by man "ſhall his blood be ſhed; for in the image of God "made he man."

It may likewiſe be added, as an additional argument for abſtaining from blood, that it is far from being a wholeſome aliment, eſpecially in hot countries, promoting leprous and ſcorbutic diſorders*.

Some have argued, that the precept given to Noah was only intended to prohibit the eating of the fleſh of animals raw, or cut off without killing the animal; but the antient Jews underſtood it dif-

* What Dr. Lardner ſays upon this ſubject is pretty remarkable. "Blood appears to me to be very unwholeſome. Indeed, I "eſteem it filthy, and highly diſagreeable. So that I cannot bear "the thought of eating it. If ever it comes to me in food, it is "more than I know. And I ſuppoſe it is never brought, either "alone, or mixed with other things, to the table of polite people." Remarks on Ward's Diſſertation, p. 132.

ferently;

ferently; and when Moſes repeats the injunction to the Jews in particular (where it cannot but be acknowledged, that he intended to expreſs a prohibition of the uſe of blood itſelf) he gives preciſely the ſame reaſon for it as in this caſe. Lev. xvii. 14. "Ye ſhall eat the blood of no manner of fleſh: "for the life of all fleſh is the blood thereof." It is moſt probable, therefore, that the two commands differ only in terms, and that they have both the very ſame meaning.

It might have been imagined that, by chriſtianity, the Gentiles, at leaſt, had been exempted from the obſervance of this precept; but among other things which were before held innocent or indifferent by them, but which were proper to be obſerved after their converſion to chriſtianity, the apoſtles expreſsly included this, when they were ſolemnly aſſembled in council, in order to write to the diſciples at Antioch, who had applied to them about their obligation to obſerve the laws of Moſes. And though it is not expreſsly ſaid, that they were particularly directed by God to decide in this manner, yet it ſeems to be implied, when they ſay, that *it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt*, as well as to themſelves, Acts xv. 28. "It ſeemed good to the "Holy Ghoſt, and to us, to lay upon you no "greater burden than theſe neceſſary things; that "ye abſtain from meats offered to idols, and from "blood, and from things ſtrangled, and from for-

"nication;

" nication: from which, if ye keep yourſelves, ye " ſhall do well."

It is ſaid by ſome, and eſpecially Dr. Lardner, that this was only a temporary proviſion, deſigned to prevent giving offence to the Jews; but, in anſwer to this, it may be ſaid, that there is no intimation, or hint, of its being temporary, or any mention made of a time when the prohibition was to ceaſe; and the apoſtle John wrote after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, when it cannot be pretended, that there was any neceſſity for obſerving ſo much tenderneſs with reſpect to the Jews.

Moreover, it is not impoſſible, but that our Lord himſelf might refer to this decree of the apoſtles, and thereby give his ſanction to it, when, in his meſſage to the church at Thyatira, he ſays, Rev. ii. 24. " I will put upon you none other burden. " But that which ye have already, hold faſt till I " come." No moral precept is ever properly called a burden in the ſcriptures; and, therefore, they are probably ſome obſervances of a ceremonial nature, that are referred to; and the very ſame word, βαρος, *burden*, is made uſe of, both by the apoſtles, and by our Lord on this occaſion *.

It

* It appears to me rather extraordinary, that Dr. Lardner ſhould be of opinion, that our Lord refers to this apoſtolical decree in the Revelation, which he ſuppoſes to have been written in the year 95 or 96, a long time after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and

It may ſeem extraordinary, that the prohibition of *fornication* ſhould be joined to that of eating blood, in the ſame decree; but it ſhould be conſidered, that fornication was not thought to be an immorality by the Gentiles; and even the Jews had not the ſame ideas of chaſtity and purity in this reſpect, which are enjoined upon chriſtians. Dr. Lardner ſuppoſes that, by fornication in the apoſtolical decree, we are to underſtand marriage with heathens, from which the apoſtle Paul ſo earneſtly diſſuades the chriſtians at Corinth.

Dr. Lardner alſo ſuppoſes, that, "the decree "is not to be underſtood as a precept or com- "mandment, but as advice and counſel, concern- "ing matters of prudence and expedience, conſi- "dering the circumſtances of things and perſons "in that time." Remarks on Ward's Diſſertations, page 141. But it cannot be denied, that it becomes all chriſtians to yield to ſuch advice and

and yet that it ſhould have been intended to continue in force only *till his religion had made greater progreſs in the world*; as if that was the meaning of *his coming*: whereas, I do not think, that any thing elſe in the language of the New Teſtament would lead us to conclude, that this phraſe was applicable to any other than ſome *determinate event*, and eſpecially the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, or the time of the final judgment. See Remarks on Ward's Diſſertations, p. 122.

counſel,

counſel, if it extend to them. And if, as he allows, it did extend to chriſtians after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, I do not ſee that there is not equal reaſon why it ſhould extend to us. And *one* of the reaſons for abſtaining from blood, which was hinted at when the prohibition was given to Noah, is of as much weight now as ever it was.

It has been urged as an argument againſt the perpetuity of the apoſtolical decree in the Acts, that the apoſtle Paul never quotes, or alludes to it in his writings. But, admitting it to be temporary, no perſon will maintain that it was not deſigned to extend beyond the time of his epiſtles; and yet, though the unlawfulneſs of *fornication* be allowed to be perpetual, Paul did not avail himſelf of any argument drawn from that decree when he wrote on that ſubject to the Corinthians, who, of all the Greeks, were moſt remarkably addicted to that vice.

If we interpret this prohibition of the apoſtles by the practice of the primitive chriſtians, who can hardly be ſuppoſed not to have rightly underſtood the nature and extent of it, we cannot but conclude, that it was intended to be abſolute and perpetual; for blood was not eaten by any chriſtians for many centuries. When the chriſtians were charged with meeting in the night, and drinking blood,

blood, by way of binding one another to ſecrecy, in ſome immoral practices, Tertullian obſerves with reſpect to it, that it was well known that no chriſtian would eat blood at all; inſomuch, that it was uſual with heathens, when they wanted to know whether any perſon was a chriſtian, to ſet blood-puddings before him as a very ſufficient teſt.

Blood is not eaten by chriſtians in any part of the Eaſt, or by the Greeks, or Ruſſians, who are of the Greek church, to this day; nor indeed was the uſe of blood introduced into this weſtern part of the world till very late. When the Pomeranians were converted to chriſtianity, which was in 1120, they were particularly enjoined to abſtain from blood, as a badge of their profeſſion. It was not allowed to be eaten in the Weſt in the time of Bede, or a century afterwards; and blood was not eaten in any part of Switzerland till Calvin introduced the practice from ſome other place. See Curcellæus on this ſubject. Dr. Lardner, however, ſays, that little regard was paid to theſe regulations of the apoſtolical decree by the Latin chriſtians, from the end of the fourth century. Remarks on Ward's Diſſertations, p. 136.

It is farther ſaid, that the *liberal ſpirit* of chriſtians is ſtrongly againſt any ſuch a diſtinction of meats as the prohibition of the uſe of blood ſuppoſes;

poſes; and that even the very *letter* of the declaration of our Lord and his apoſtles excludes any ſuch diſtinction. Thus we read, Matt. xv. 11. "Not "that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man: "but that which cometh out of the mouth, this "defileth a man." And the apoſtle Paul repreſents him who *believeth that he may eat all things*, as not *weak*, but as of a ſtronger and more enlarged mind than he who thought and acted differently, Rom. xiv. 1. He alſo ſays, v. 17. "The king-"dom of God is not meat and drink, but righte-"ouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt;" and v. 20. "All things are pure: but it is evil "for any man who eateth with offence."

But our Saviour made the declaration above-mentioned, at a time when he himſelf ſtrictly conformed even to the Jewiſh diſtinction of meats; and Paul might only allude to the ſame reſtrictions, to which, as well as to other Jewiſh rites, many chriſtians then conformed. The ſame apoſtle, in the ſame general manner, makes light of all diſtinction of *days*, though, he no doubt, made a diſtinction of one day of reſt.

Though, in diſcuſſing this ſubject, I have generally mentioned the arguments *for* the prohibition of blood before thoſe *againſt* it, and have replied to the latter more than to the former, I would not have my reader conclude, that I am fully de-

termined in my judgment with reſpect to it. Let him weigh what has been advanced on both ſides, and decide for himſelf; not forgetting, that this queſtion relates to the leaſt of all poſitive precepts, and that all poſitive or ceremonial precepts are of little importance compared to the ſmalleſt moral duty.